

Swiss reopen embassy in Tehran

BERN (AP) — The Swiss embassy in the Iranian capital Tehran reopened Sunday after being closed for one week because of a diplomatic row between the two countries. The Swiss charge d'affaires in Tehran, Walter Joffe, said the visa and foreign interests sections were operating normally. Neutral Switzerland represents the United States and South Africa in Iran. Mr. Joffe said in a telephone interview that Iranian police were allowing free access to the building. Switzerland decided to shut the embassy Dec. 29 after Iranian authorities temporarily confiscated the passport of a Swiss diplomat, Christa Felder, as she was about to depart on honeymoon. The movement of other officials were restricted. Swiss Foreign Ministry spokesman Christian Meuwly said in Bern that Ms. Felder left Iran Sunday morning. Tensions rose just before Christmas when Swiss police arrested an Iranian national on charges that he was involved in last August's murder in France of Shapour Bakhtiar, the late Shah of Iran's last prime minister. (See page 2).

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Sudan to expel 3 UAE diplomats

KHARTOUM, Sudan (AP) — Sudan will expel three United Arab Emirates (UAE) diplomats, including the ambassador, a Foreign Ministry official said Sunday. The official said that Ambassador Mohammad Sultan Al-Saidy and two other unidentified UAE officials have been declared persona non grata and have been given four days to leave the country. The three were notified Sunday. First Undersecretary Mohammad Osman Yassin was quoted by the Sudan News Agency (SUNA) as saying he "regretted that things should reach such a level between two Arab countries." He said that the decision was taken "on the basis of equal treatment," but did not specify if the emirates has decided to expel three Sudanese diplomats. For several months, the Sudanese government has accused the UAE of detaining Sudanese without charge and torturing them because the Khartoum government supported Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The United Arab Emirates has denied this charge.

Egypt arrests 3 Israelis

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian security forces have arrested three Israelis who allegedly crossed into Egypt, a police official said Sunday. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the three were arrested on Saturday at 5:30 p.m. (1530 GMT) near the south Sinai border town of Tab, 252 kilometers southeast of Cairo. He identified the three Israelis as university student Elyahu Tetter, 24, farmer Amir Arridor, 21, and Roy Baker, an unemployed 26-year-old. An employee at the Israeli embassy said he knew nothing about the incident.

Fatch official killed in Lebanon

SIDON (AP) — A lone gunman Sunday assassinated a military commander in the mainstream Fatch faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), police said. Police said Hosni Salehman was walking out of his house in this southern port city when the gunman attacked him. He fired two shots at Salehman, killing him instantly, police spokesman said, adding that the assassin remained at large and the motive for the killing was not clear. Several Fatch officials have been murdered in recent years because of personal or Palestinian rivalries.

Turkish police find 3.5 tonnes of chemicals

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish police uncovered 3.5 tonnes of chemicals and bomb-making equipment during a raid in Istanbul, the Anatolian news agency said on Saturday. It said 2.7 tonnes of sodium chloride, 250 kg of potassium chloride, two cases of gunpowder, 90 iron bomb fittings, 220 cartridges, six hand grenades and documents were found in an apartment in the city's residential Fulya district. The agency did not say when the raid took place or who the items might have belonged to.

Germany reports rise in asylum applications

BONN (R) — The number of foreigners seeking asylum in Germany rose by a third last year, prompting Interior Minister Rudolf Seiters to appeal on Sunday for tougher laws to stem the flow of immigrants. "The federal republic's scope for accepting such numbers is largely exhausted," Mr. Seiters said in a statement announcing the 1991 figures. "The states and communities are faced with grave problems accommodating and caring for these many people," he said. According to the interior minister, a record 256,112 foreigners applied for asylum in Germany last year, an increase of 32.7 per cent over the 1990 figure of 193,063. The number of applications fell slightly in December to 23,659 from the November figure of 29,185. But this does not indicate a reversal of the trend, the ministry said.

Peace talks remain on hold; onus is on Security Council

King, Arafat discuss impasse; PLO leader says no decision yet on Washington meeting

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter with agency dispatches

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Sunday discussed the impasse in the Middle East peace process following the Israeli decision to expel 12 Palestinians from the occupied territories and the Arab counter-move to put peace negotiations on hold.

No details were immediately available on the talks between the King and Mr. Arafat, who arrived here from Cairo after talks with President Hosni Mubarak on the Palestinian demand for United Nations Security Council action on the Israeli expulsion decision.

Informed sources said the next Arab move depended on the outcome of Security Council deliberations over the Israeli decision. The PLO has called for an urgent meeting of the council and it was expected that the world body could hold a session Monday although there was no formal

announcement until late Sunday. Israel meanwhile appeared to firm up its position that no form of pressure would work with the Jewish state, which will go ahead with implementing the expulsion order regardless of the fate of peace talks with the Arabs.

The Palestinian, Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese delegations have postponed their departure for Washington for the next round of bilateral talks with Israel in protest against the Israeli move. The talks were scheduled to begin Jan. 7.

Mr. Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said in an arrival statement here that his talks with the King would cover "important" issues dealing with the impediments Israel is placing in the path of peace.

"We want to remove these obstacles before continuing the peace process," said Mr. Arafat, who is scheduled to travel to Syria Monday for talks with President Hafez Al Assad.

Mr. Arafat underlined the importance the Palestinians attach

to adopting a unified Arab position and inter-Arab coordination in dealing with Israel.

Close coordination and unified steps with Jordan were an essential part of the Palestinian approach, he said. "We are a joint delegation and we have a joint march, joint aspirations and joint hopes," he told reporters.

Mr. Arafat was received upon arrival by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and senior officials.

Later in the day, Sharif Zeid, along with other senior Jordanian officials, attended a Palestinian celebration marking the anniversary of the mainstream Fatch movement of the PLO.

Mr. Arafat said earlier in Cairo Palestinian leaders were still discussing whether to send delegates to Washington in consultation with other Arab parties to the talks.

The PLO Executive Committee suspended a meeting in Tunis on Saturday without a decision. PLO Executive Committee

member Yasser Abed Rabbo told reporters in Amman Palestinian delegates would only go to Washington if Israel reversed its plans to expel the 12 Arabs and improved treatment of civilians under occupation.

"The team will not go to Washington before the issue related to the deportations is solved and basis are put to guarantee that Israel will adhere to the Fourth Geneva Convention during negotiations," he said.

The convention provides rules for the treatment of civilians under occupation. Palestinians say Israel is violating them through daily arrests and expulsions and its iron-fist efforts to quell the four-year-old Palestinian uprising.

Mr. Abed Rabbo said he expected the U.N. Security Council to take a firm stand on the expulsions and issue a resolution. "We expect them to take a stand condemning deportations, calling on Israel to reverse this process and implement the

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Algerian Islamists prepare battle

ALGIERS (R) — Efficient Muslim fundamentalists swung into action at the weekend for Algeria's general election run-off as divided democrats sought ways to block the advance to a promised Islamic state.

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which took a commanding lead in December's first round ballot, sought permission to hold dozens of rallies across the country.

Officials in several areas said it was the first party to submit a campaign programme to the authorities.

"We are going to swallow up all the seats during the second round," forecast a confident FIS leader Abdul Kader Moghni, elected outright for the 430-seat parliament last month.

Other Islamic parties which competed with FIS in the first round threw their weight behind the victor.

Abdullah Djaballah, leader of Al Nahda, called on supporters to vote for the FIS and defend its victory.

Hamas, another Islamic group, effectively followed, telling supporters to remain steadfast to an Islamic solution for Algeria. The Umma movement on Sunday also called for Algerians to support the Islamic choice.

In contrast there was no concerted call for defeated democrats to swing behind the National Liberation Front (FLN), which ruled Algeria as a one-party state for nearly 30 years and is the fundamentalists' main opponent in the run-offs.

More than 40 per cent of Algeria's 13.2 million voters abstained in the first round and nearly a million ballots were spoiled.

The FIS triumph — 188 seats won outright — came from just 3.36 million votes. FIS and the Islamic parties now supporting it got 3.9 million votes, about 30 per cent of the electorate.

The FLN and other democratic parties got 2.7 million votes. Over 300 complaints have been officially lodged, mostly by losing parties, over alleged irregularities in the first round. Results are under challenge in 145 seats.

Forecasting that the Constitution Council would reject most appeals, FIS provisional leader Abdul Kader Hachani told Algiers Radio: "Most of the complaints are without foundation."

Israel: No reversal of expulsion decision

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel's hardline government on Sunday stubbornly stood by a decision to expel 12 Palestinians from the occupied territories despite world condemnation and a threat to Middle East peace talks.

Cabinet ministers said Israeli delegates would travel to Washington as planned Sunday, though Arab negotiators put off their departures in protest at the announced expulsions.

"Our delegation is leaving tonight and I hope it will find the Arab delegations in Washington. If necessary we will wait for them," Health Minister Ehud Olmert said after a cabinet meeting.

"We all know the world does not like the deportations and that there is almost automatic condemnation ... no, we will not reverse our decision," he told Reuters.

The peace talks, due to resume on Jan. 7, were thrown into jeopardy when Israel announced the expulsions on Thursday after a Jewish settler was shot dead in the occupied Gaza Strip.

Cabinet ministers brushed off suggestions that the timing was inappropriate ahead of the peace talks.

"Every timing is bad when you

do something unacceptable to others...it (the expulsion) will not be at the expense of the peace talks. They will come, don't worry," Mr. Olmert said.

Religious Affairs Minister Avner Shaki said Palestinian delegates were responsible for their people's actions.

"We want to show that you cannot at the same time talk peace and make violence, talk peace and kill people. This is our answer," he said.

Candidates for expulsion may take their case to the Israeli supreme court, but there has never been a successful appeal.

The far-right praised the expulsions and called for more.

"Twelve is too few too late," said Minister-without-Portfolio Rehavam Zeevi of the Moledet (Homeland) party.

The European Community (EC) Sunday expressed "grave concern" about the expulsion of Palestinians from the occupied territories, called it illegal and urged Israel to meet its obligations.

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Settlers block roads

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli settlers angry over the killing of a fellow settler blocked main roads in the occupied territories for about two hours on Sunday to stop Palestinians going to work in the Jewish state.

Israel Radio said 15 settlers were detained at one roadblock in the West Bank after they burned tyres — a tactic borrowed from Palestinian protesters.

One settler at a roadblock outside Jerusalem said Israel should do more than expel Palestinians to put down the four-year-old Palestinian uprising.

Israel's announcement on Thursday that it was expelling 12 Palestinians drew sharp U.S. condemnation and has jeopardised the next round of Middle East peace talks due to open in Washington on Tuesday.

The announcement came a day after a settler was shot dead in the occupied Gaza Strip.

Israel Radio said the settlers voluntarily abandoned most roadblocks after about two hours. Palestinians closed down Gaza shops and businesses in a spontaneous general strike and university students stayed at home, residents said.



His Majesty King Hussein Sunday receives Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in a meeting attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker

Iraq to seek higher U.N.-okayed oil sales, changes in guidelines

By P.V. Vivekanand Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Iraq will press for an increase in quantity and relaxation of guidelines set by the United Nations Sanctions Committee for a one-time sale of oil for humanitarian purposes during talks in Vienna this week with U.N. officials, informed sources said Sunday.

"Iraq is likely to drop the entire deal if the Sanctions Committee rejects its conditions," said one of the sources. "It feels that the U.N. terms are already humiliating and seriously believes in its argument that they represent a blatant interference in its sovereignty," added the source, who preferred anonymity.

Under a resolution adopted by the Sanctions Committee, Iraq is

permitted a one-time sale of oil worth \$1.6 billion to raise funds for food and medicine for the Iraqi people. The proceeds from the sales will be controlled by a special U.N. body, which will set aside 30 per cent for war reparations and a yet unknown amount to finance U.N. operations related to the Gulf crisis, including the costs involved in eliminating Iraq's mass destruction weapons and production facilities and monitoring the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border following the Gulf war last year.

Iraq will be free to enter oil export and commodity purchase contracts but all deals have to be approved and controlled through an escrow account operated by the U.N. panel.

The U.N. panel will also supervise the distribution of food and

medicine to the Iraqi people. The sanctions were imposed on Iraq following its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

An American-led coalition fought Iraq and freed Kuwait in February last year.

Some of the key Iraqi demands expected to be tabled in Vienna by the country's U.N. ambassador, Abdul Amir Al Anbari, include an increase of the volume of permitted exports to a minimum of \$2.4 billion instead of \$1.6 billion and permission to operate the Mina Al Bakr oil terminal in the Gulf, the sources said.

Iraq, which argues that it would receive less than \$700 million from the proceeds after the

(Continued on page 5)

Arab League to contact rival Somali factions to end war

CAIRO (Agencies) — The Arab League agreed at an emergency meeting Sunday to appoint a ministerial committee to contact Somalia's rival warlords to pave the way for reconciliation talks, possibly in Cairo.

A resolution by the permanent representatives of the 21-member league agreed to "appoint the secretary-general, (Esmat Abdul Meguid), to carry out necessary consultations with foreign ministers of member states to set up a ministerial committee..."

The resolution said the committee, grouping Egypt, Yemen, Libya, the United Arab Emirates and the secretary general, would make immediate contact with the factions in Somalia.

"(That is) to pave the way to invite these factions to an emergency meeting held in the Arab League building or any other place seen suitable to discuss the best way to reach the unity and stability of brotherly Somalia," the resolution said (see related story on page 2).

The resolution was drafted by a committee comprising Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

The Arab League also agreed to assign the secretary-general to open an account to deposit financial aid for Somalia and agreed to provide the country with urgent relief aid.

UNICEF official killed

A U.N. representative was killed in an attack on U.N. offices in northern Somalia Sunday, the United Nations said.

Dr. Marta Pompaola was slain in an attack in the town of Bossaso, the U.N. said in a statement.

Chad's army reportedly in firm control

N'DJAMENA, Chad (AP) — Chad's army is in firm control around Lake Chad after recapturing two towns held briefly by invading rebels, official Chad radio said Sunday.

France's foreign minister, Roland Dumas, also said President Idriss Deby had brought the situation under control in the former French colony.

But radio calls for health workers to report for hospital duty suggested that some fighting might be continuing in the area 200 kilometres north of the capital, N'Djamena, along Chad's borders with Niger and Nigeria.

The government said Saturday that its troops were still pursuing rebel fighters although it claimed a day earlier that the invasion by supporters of ousted President Hissene Habre had been crushed. About 5,000 fighters loyal to Mr. Habre fled to Niger after he was overthrown by Mr. Deby in December 1990.

Mr. Habre now lives in Dakar, Senegal, but is known to have loyalists in his homeland and in neighbouring countries.

A correspondent for Chad radio, who was not identified, said the fighting had been "murderous."

"The ground was strewn with bodies which the peasants desperately tried to bury," according to the reporter, who said he made a one-day visit to the area Saturday.

In a preliminary report Saturday, the defence ministry said 400 rebels and 25 government soldiers had died in fighting that began Dec. 22. The fighting intensified last week after the rebels captured the towns of Bol and Liwa.

The Chad radio correspondent said he had confirmed Bol was back in government hands, saying it was retaken without a fight as rebels fled after looting government sugar and textile stores.

The Movement for Democracy and Development, which claims to be the political arm of the rebel forces, has charged that the government was lying in saying it had regained control around Lake Chad.

Bush about to bring \$10 billion axe down on Israel

By Alan Elser Renter

WASHINGTON — For three months, U.S. President George Bush has held a \$10 billion axe over Israel's head. Now it may be about to fall.

Some time this month, Mr. Bush has to decide whether to agree to Israel's request for loan guarantees worth \$10 billion to help it absorb hundreds of thousands of Soviet immigrants.

Not even the most optimistic pro-Israel lobbyist, Jewish leader or Israeli diplomat believes Israel will get the money without stringent conditions attached and there are many who believe the Israelis will get nothing.

"I'm very afraid Israel could end up not getting a penny. I'm not sure that the Israeli government appreciates how precarious its position has become in the United States," said a Jewish source, who like others asked not to be identified.

Another Jewish leader said Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir believes he could continue policies the United States opposes — such as expelling Palestinian activists, as Israel announced it was doing last week, and building settlements in the occupied territories — and still get the money.

The Washington Jewish Week said last week that Mr. Shamir was being advised by right-wing political appointees in the Israeli embassy in Washington that he could get the money, even though American Jewish leaders had warned him this was highly unlikely if Israel continued its settlement drive.

The newspaper said American Jews were disillusioned with Mr. Shamir's policies and had no stomach for a new fight with Mr. Bush that they knew they would lose.

"Shamir has the attitude that somehow God will provide and he has to adopt hardline policies to deal with domestic political crises. He may not realise the scope in the change of atmosphere in

Washington," the Jewish leader said.

The guarantees would allow Israel to raise lower-interest, longer-term commercial loans than in otherwise could get. They would be in addition to the regular \$3 billion in aid that Israel gets from the United States every year.

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Israel first asked for the guarantees last September after Mr. Shamir rejected a request from Mr. Bush to postpone presenting the request until after the start of Middle East peace talks.

A furious Bush then called a news conference to denounce the "powerful forces" arrayed against him — a thinly-veiled reference to the strong pro-Israeli lobby in Congress.

Mr. Bush asked Congress for a 120-day "pause for peace" before considering the request. Israel's support in Congress melted away in the

face of his ire and the delay was granted — a major victory for Mr. Bush and humiliation for the Israel lobby.

The 120 days run out in mid-January. U.S. officials have avoided discussing the issue, recognising that policy will be set by Mr. Bush, who himself has given no clue to his thinking.

Israel's supporters in Washington are painfully aware that many things have changed since September, almost all of them for the bad from Israel's viewpoint.

The United States has suok deeper into recession. Sentiment against foreign aid has grown in Congress and the country. Mr. Bush faces a tough fight in the New Hampshire Republican primary against candidates running on "America first" platforms.

Meanwhile, Israel has pushed ahead with building Jewish settlements on occupied Arab land. In his annual budget last week, Mr. Shamir bowed to ultra-nationalist demands to spend most of the 1992 housing construction

budget on settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"What is clear is that we cannot beat the president on this. Whatever is decided would have to be as a result of an agreement between Bush and Israel," said one Jewish leader.

Diplomats and Jewish leaders say Mr. Bush could link the loan guarantees to a settlement freeze, a request that could bring down the Israeli government and provoke new elections which are due by November at the latest.

Or he could decide to deduct every dollar that Israel spends on settlements from the amount of the loan guarantee.

The latter course presents the problem of how to calculate exactly what is spent on settlements. Would Israel agree to open its books to American officials? And would Jerusalem be included in the occupied territories?

"It's a nest of vipers for Israel either way," the Jewish leader said.

Deadline ends with Germans still hostage

BEIRUT (R) — The U.N. deadline for the end of Lebanon's hostage saga has passed with two Germans still held as pawns by hostage-takers who want Bonn to free two Lebanese brothers jailed for murder, air piracy and kidnapping.

Pro-Iranian political sources said on Sunday aid workers Heinrich Struebig, 50, and Thomas Kemptner, 30, would most probably remain captive until the United Nations renewed its initiative to end the Middle East hostage saga.

"The situation will remain as it is until the United Nations renews its efforts to end this problem. Before that, I don't think things will change," one source told Reuters.

U.N. envoy Giandomenico Picco, who had an unbroken record of winning the release of Western captives on every visit to the Middle East for a hostage-related mission, failed to secure the release of the Germans during his most recent trip to the region last month.

Javier Perez de Cuellar had wanted all hostages freed before he left office as secretary-general of the U.N. at the end of last year.

Syrian and Iranian pressure on kidnappers of the Germans failed to move the captors on their demand that Bonn should free brothers Mohammad Ali and Abbas Hamadi.

The pro-Iranian sources said the kidnappers remained sceptical of reports that the brothers' fate may be reviewed by Bonn once the aid workers were freed.

Bonn has refused to exchange them for the hostages.

The sources said the case of the German hostages was different

from that of the nine Westerners freed by their captors since August.

"The hostages who were freed lately were mainly held for political reasons unlike the Germans who were kidnapped for personal reasons. This is why Iranian and Syrian pressure has failed so far to achieve positive results," one source said.

The kidnappers — the shadowy Freedom Strugglers Group — released a videotape last month showing the German captives eating a Christmas meal.

In the tape, the Germans urged their government to work harder for their freedom and said Chancellor Helmut Kohl should free the Hamadis.

Although Bonn has repeatedly refused the idea of a swap it has been in contact with Tehran and Damascus, which have influence over kidnappers in Lebanon.

Mr. Struebig and Mr. Kemptner were working for a small private aid group when they were abducted in South Lebanon in May 1989.

They are thought to be held by the followers of the Hamadis' elder brother Abdul Hadi. Mr. Abdul Hadi is a senior security official of the pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God), which is believed to be the cover for underground kidnappers. Hizbollah denies any links to the hostage-takers.

Mohammad Ali Hamadi was arrested in 1987 sentenced to life imprisonment in 1989 for his part in an aircraft hijack during which a U.S. navy diver was killed.

Abbas was jailed for 13 years in April, 1988 for his part in the kidnapping of two German businessmen in an effort to win his brother's freedom.

Paper calls on Tehran to reconsider Paris ties

NICOSIA (AP) — A Tehran newspaper has called on the government to reconsider ties with Paris, after France demanded Switzerland extradite an Iranian wanted in the murder of an Iranian opposition figure in Paris.

The editorial came less than a week after Paris agreed to pay Tehran \$1 billion to settle a long-running financial dispute. France has been eager to get more business in Iran's multi-billion-dollar reconstruction projects.

But the Farsi-language Abrar (the Pious) newspaper said the "government is not ready to tolerate the presence of France in the country's economic reconstruction at the cost of these lives."

The paper has been outraged at France for demanding extradition from Bern of a man charged he was involved in the August slaying of Sahapur Bakhtiar, Iran's last prime minister before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Mr. Sarhadi, 25, was arrested Dec. 23 outside the Iranian embassy in Bern, where he had been staying.

Tehran claimed the arrest violated international agreements on the treatment of diplomats. Swiss authorities said Mr. Sarhadi was not registered as a diplomat or embassy employee.

In response, Iran began harassing Swiss embassy officials in Tehran. The embassy closed down in protest last Sunday after a Swiss diplomat's passport was confiscated at Tehran airport, causing her to miss her flight leaving the country.

Walter Haffner, the Swiss chargé d'affaires at the embassy, said Thursday that the mission would reopen sometime this week.

Tehran's latest diplomatic squabbles with France and Switzerland follow months of painstaking efforts by Iran's President Hashemi Rafsanjani to

change the country's radical image and act responsible in the international community.

Mr. Rafsanjani needs foreign investment and technology to improve the quality of life for his people in face of mounting popular opposition. He cannot afford another showdown with the West, which would jeopardize his economic policies.

French President Francois Mitterrand would visit Tehran in September or October 1991. That visit has not taken place.

Abrar, a radical, anti-Western newspaper, said French news reports implicating Iran in Mr. Bakhtiar's murder, the questioning of Iranian diplomats by the French government, and French pressure on Bern to extradite Mr. Sarhadi "are not acceptable for our nation."

The editorial urged the government to "show appropriate reaction against these hostile measures."

Abrar also condemned France for providing sanctuary to various Iranian opposition movements.

It said Tehran should "reconsider the level of its relations with a country which is a haven for criminals."

Abrar blamed Mr. Bakhtiar's murder on his opponents in France, and said the French government knew this.

It accused Paris of trying to "involve the Islamic Republic and portray it as the culprit in order to cover up the murder and acquit the real culprits."

Anis Naccache, a Lebanese now living in Tehran, was given a life sentence in France for his botched attempt to kill Mr. Bakhtiar in July 1980. He was freed in July last year after tremendous pressure from Iran.

Mr. Naccache has said that Mr. Bakhtiar was condemned to death by the Iranian Revolutionary Tribunal.



PREMIER MEETS KADDOUMI: Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Sunday meets with Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) Political Department head Farouk Kaddoumi (right). Discussions during the meeting focused on Middle East peace efforts and the impasse in Arab-Israeli negotiations as well as the multilateral Middle East talks to be held in Moscow Jan. 28-29. The Sharif Zeid-Kaddoumi meeting was attended on the

Jordanian side by Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Thagham Hindawi (left), Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Ibrahim Izzeddine. On the Palestinian side, the talks were attended by members of the Executive Committee of the PLO Yasser Abed Rabbo, Sulaiman Najjib and Yasser Arafat, as well as Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Al Tayyeb Abdul Rahim.

U.N. official presses Iraq on human rights

BAGHDAD (R) — A U.N. investigator is visiting Iraq to press the government on accusations of executions, mass arrests and disappearances.

"There are quite a number of allegations of violations of human rights... we will be trying to clarify these matters," Max van der Stoep, appointed by the Human Rights Commission as special rapporteur for Iraq, told Reuters Sunday.

Delegation officials said the visit was the first by a U.N. human rights team to Iraq.

Mr. Van der Stoep said he would ask Iraqi officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, to respond to the reports.

A U.N. report on human rights in Iraq, to be presented to U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali in February, is expected to coincide with a debate on extending Security Council sanctions against Baghdad.

An interim report published in November carried charges, some of them unsubstantiated, that Iraqi government troops strapped women and children to tanks during post-Gulf war Kurdish and Shiite rebellions.

In another incident, it alleged, patients in a hospital were disconnected from equipment and thrown out of windows.

Baghdad implicitly acknowledged that patients were thrown to their deaths from hospital windows during the Shiite rebellion in March but blamed it on Iranian-led insurgents, the U.N. said.

The report charged that Iraq had not explained the disappearance of 2,200 detained cases of men, women and children last seen in Iraqi government camps in the Kurdish province of Erbil.

Mr. Van der Stoep, who arrived on Friday, will travel to northern Iraq and the south during his week-long visit.

Two Americans and a Filipino, expelled by Iraq on Saturday after being held for almost a month as suspected saboteurs, said they had seen a nine-year-old boy in a Baghdad detention centre.

The men, now in Kuwait, reported seeing prisoners beaten, blood-stained wooden clubs in a shower and hearing screams. They were not beaten themselves.

Iraq acknowledges that torture and beatings take place but says it punishes those responsible when reported.

U.S. seeks Gulf oil for strategic reserve

KUWAIT (Agencies) — The United States will ask several Arab oil exporting countries whether they are interested in providing crude for its strategic petroleum reserve (SPR), a senior U.S. energy official said Saturday.

Deputy Energy Secretary Henson Moore told reporters in Kuwait he would raise the issue in talks with Saudi Oil Minister Hisham Nazer and other countries on his Gulf tour. This will include Oman, Qatar, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates.

"If any of them have an interest in discussing with us any kind of arrangement for a long-term or future contract to help supply oil for our SPR we're more than willing to discuss that with them," he said.

SPR was conceived in the 1970s to protect against oil price shocks. The emergency supply of oil, nearly 600 million barrels, is stored in underground salt caverns in Texas and Louisiana.

Mr. Moore said Saudi Arabia — which last year told Washington it could not provide oil for the strategic reserve — had never begun negotiations on a U.S. proposal for the step because it did not have surplus crude.

But he said in the future the situation might change. Saudi Arabia, now producing about 8.5 million barrels per day (bpd), plans to boost capacity to 10 million bpd by the end of 1994.

"That's something we're going to discuss if he (Mr. Nazer) is interested," Mr. Moore said.

"The situation in Saudi Arabia is simply that they need production to earn hard currency for government cash flow reasons... but I think that in the future that may be a possibility," he added.

Mr. Moore said he had not raised the subject during talks with Kuwaiti Oil Minister Hamoud Abdullah Al Raqba because Kuwait, still rebuilding its oil industry, was even less in a position to think about diverting some of its crude production.

But he said a tentative Kuwaiti plan to allow foreign companies to invest in its oil industry had been discussed.

Mr. Raqba has said the government is considering the step but ruled out foreign participation in production.

"Most companies would be willing to make an investment if it's a joint venture... that may be being considered by the Kuwaiti oil ministry," he said.

"But it's strictly as I understand it tentative — there are no hard plans yet," he said.

Iraq assails U.N. plan

In another development Iraq's oil minister said Saturday that a U.N. Security Council plan to sell \$1.6 billion worth of Iraqi oil was a violation of the country's sovereignty.

The statement by Osama Abdul Razzak Al Hiti came one day after the U.S. State Department said Iraq should immediately accept the plan so it could buy food and medicine for its population.

Many Iraqis are suffering because of the U.N. economic sanctions started after the invasion of Kuwait Aug. 2, 1990.

The Security Council in August decided not to lift the sanctions because of alleged Iraqi failure to comply fully with resolutions on the Gulf war ceasefire.

The council agreed to allow the \$1.6 billion in oil sales for emergency supplies, to pay for U.N. relief programmes and to begin paying reparations to Kuwait.

Iraq said the proposal would not provide enough money for food and medicine and that proposed U.N. scrutiny of the sales infringed on its sovereignty.

Mr. Hiti said the plan constitutes "an overt interference in Iraq's internal affairs and a violation of its sovereignty, security and independence," the Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported.

It said his remarks came during a discussion of the Security Council resolutions by a parliamentary committee.

On Friday, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Iraq had ignored U.N. resolutions designed for it to combat growing hunger.

"We call upon the government of Iraq to immediately and unconditionally accept these Security Council resolutions," Mr. Boucher said in a statement.

Mr. Hiti was quoted as saying that Iraq had fully implemented its obligations under U.N. resolutions and "will not accept any interference in what it considers its own national and internal matters, especially those related to the country's oil wealth."

He said the United Nations now realises that it had been "embroidered" by the United States into adopting resolutions 706 and 712 authorising the oil sales.

U.N. officials have discovered the infeasibility of the mechanism inherent for exporting Iraqi oil, the minister said.

He also charged that the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has fallen under Saudi influence.

U.N. envoy sees little chance for peace in Somalia

NAIROBI (Agencies) — A special U.N. envoy said he saw little hope of obtaining a ceasefire between warring clans in the devastated Somali capital of Mogadishu.

James Jonah, U.N. under-secretary for African affairs, made a surprise return to Mogadishu Saturday for talks with the leader of one of the factions, President Ali Mahdi Mohammad.

Mr. Jonah told the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in a satellite telephone call from the Somali capital that Mr. Ali Mahdi would welcome a U.N. attempt to restore peace.

But Mr. Ali Mahdi's rival for power, General Mohammed Farah Aided, told Mr. Jonah Friday that any foreign intervention would be an unacceptable intrusion into Somalia's internal affairs.

A U.N. spokesman in Nairobi said Mr. Jonah had left for northern Somalia as planned on Saturday, but he flew instead to northern Mogadishu, where Mr. Ali Mahdi's forces maintain a stronghold.

Mr. Jonah had hoped to meet with both Gen. Aided and Mr. Ali Mahdi on his initial visit Friday, but was able to talk only to the general in his headquarters on Mogadishu's south side.

The U.N. official said continued shelling and a dispute between the two warlords over his method of travel within the city had made a visit to Mr. Ali Mahdi's camp impossible.

Meanwhile, foreign ministers of the Arab League were to meet in Cairo Sunday to discuss the fighting in Mogadishu, estimated by the United Nations to have killed or wounded up to 20,000 people, mostly women and children.

The emergency session of the 21-member league was requested by Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa because of "the deteriorating situation in Somalia."

Somalia, a country of about seven million mostly nomadic people, is the only nation in sub-Saharan Africa that belongs to the Arab League.

Mr. Ali Mahdi and Gen. Aided both belong to the United Somali Congress (USC) controlled by the Hawiye clan of central Somalia, but they represent different sub-clans and have long been rivals.

The congress named Mr. Ali Mahdi president soon after it drove former President Mohamed Siad Barre out of Mogadishu a year ago. Gen. Aided won the congress' chairmanship last June.

Northern Somalia is ruled by the Somali National Movement (SNM) of the Issaq clan, which also fought against Mr. Siad Barre. It seceded from the south in May and declared itself the independent Somaliland republic.

Mr. Jonah told reporters after returning to Nairobi from Mogadishu on Saturday night: "I have to say I am pessimistic."

"My mission was an exploratory one, to determine whether there is common ground between the factions for the United Nations to play a meaningful role. We will have to wait and see."

Mr. Jonah said Mr. Ali Mahdi agreed that the United Nations should send a peace-keeping force to maintain law and order in Mogadishu. The interim president also told Mr. Jonah that he considered the United Nations should play a role in Somali reconciliation.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Mubarak refuses to intercede on behalf of author

CAIRO (AP) — President Hosni Mubarak has refused to intercede on behalf of an author convicted of blasphemy, saying religions must be respected, daily Al Akhbar reported Sunday. "The conviction was issued by a judge. If there are people who say 'I should relieve him from the conviction, I say, I am sorry, I cannot forget the law. You cannot come and harm religion and then say never mind,'" Mr. Mubarak told a group of writers at the opening of the annual book exhibition Saturday. "If there is a mistake in the law, it will be looked into. But it is impossible to relieve him from the sentence. We have to respect religions," Mr. Mubarak added. He said that the appeal was being "looked into" by the concerned authorities. Mr. Mubarak's discussion with the writers on numerous subjects was reported by all papers, but only Al Akhbar carried his full quotes on the blasphemy case in its Sunday issue. Novelist Alaa Hamid, his publisher-distributor and his printer were convicted last month of blasphemy. Each was sentenced to eight years in jail. The convictions, issued by a special security court, can only be appealed to the prime minister. Mr. Hamid was judged to have erred by writing fictionalised, humorous stories about Islam's prophets. The book, "A Distance in a Man's Mind" has been confiscated. The conviction has worried Cairo's literary elite.

Ankara flights resume after fog lifts

ISTANBUL (R) — Air traffic at Ankara's Esenboga airport was back to normal on Sunday after being suspended for more than 24 hours due to dense fog, officials said. Flights resumed at 11:50 a.m. (0950 GMT), they said. Fog forced cancellations of 24 international and 33 domestic flights. Passengers on early Sunday flights to Hanover, Hamburg and Berlin travelled by road to Istanbul where charter flights were arranged.

Turkish major, Kurdish rebel die in shootout

PAZARCIK, Turkey (AP) — An army major and a Kurdish separatist rebel died in a shootout on Saturday in southeastern Turkey, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported. The governor of Kahramanmaraş province said the clash between the security forces and rebels that began in Pazarcik was continuing, and that reinforcements had been asked from nearby provinces. Anatolia reported. Kurdish guerrillas have been fighting since 1984 to set up an independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey. About 3,000 people, including civilians, security personnel and separatist Kurds have died in clashes in the fighting since then. There are about 12 million ethnic Kurds in this country of 59 million.

Frenchman found slain in Beirut

BEIRUT (AP) — A Frenchman was found shot in the head at his home in Beirut's residential district of Ashrafieh, police sources said Saturday. A source, speaking on condition of anonymity, identified the victim as Vincent Quetel, 53, a bachelor who worked on the administration of the French-subsidised Hotel Dieu Hospital. The French embassy made no public comment on the reported murder. The source said the slaying probably occurred the night of Dec. 25, and the body was discovered on Friday. His colleagues, worried by his prolonged absence, went to his landlady and obtained a key to his apartment. "The apartment had been searched carefully but no evidence was found about a theft and no clue to the motive behind the murder," he added. The source said Mr. Quetel was a Christian militant who founded a quixotic group calling itself the Federal Union of Middle Eastern Christians. The group, little known beyond Mr. Quetel and his intimate friends, had distributed pamphlets calling upon the Christians of the Middle East to unite. But its activity was not taken seriously even by Lebanon's Christian groupings.

Baby born aboard Gulf Air flight

MANILA (AP) — A 23-year-old Filipino gave birth Saturday to a 2.5kg baby boy shortly before her Gulf Air flight touched down at the capital's airport. The mother, Veronica Cordero, said she would name her son "Gulfer John" in honour of the airline. Officials said Miss Cordero, who had been working as a maid in Dubai, went into labour as the plane was approaching Manila on a flight from Bahrain and Bangkok. A Filipino midwife assisted the flight crew in the delivery, which occurred five minutes before the plane touched down.

Sudan parliament to have 300 members

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's new transitional parliament will have 300 members, many drawn from the ruling junta and federal state authorities, Sudanese leader Omar Hassan Al Bashir said on Saturday. He told a new conference the transitional parliament will include all 11 members of his military council, council advisors, governors and officials from Sudan's nine states, representatives of trade unions and the army, and other national figures. Lieutenant-General Bashir dissolved Sudan's elected parliament, political parties and trade unions when he seized power in a bloodless coup in June 1989. He announced the plan to appoint an assembly with wide powers in an independence day speech on Wednesday. He said on Saturday the new parliament would take account of the country's former political groups. He said the head of state will not be a member of the parliament. He will have the right to dismiss the parliament but will have to replace it within 60 days. He said because of the civil war in southern Sudan and the time needed for change, no specific period had been set for a return to civilian rule. The military junta will relinquish all its legislative powers to the parliament, expected to be appointed within a few days. The ruling council will confine itself to constitutional matters and the protection of the country's national unity. A Justice Ministry statement on Thursday said the parliament would have a speaker, two deputy speakers, a secretary general and 12 permanent committees.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 73111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
10:00	Le Monde Sous Marin de Jacques-Yves Cousteau
10:15	News in French
10:30	Weekly Sports Magazine
10:45	News in Hebrew
11:00	News in Arabic
11:15	Hey Dad
11:30	Nippon
11:45	Gabriels Fire
PRAYER TIMES	
05:09	Fajr
06:31	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:50	Dhuhr
14:28	'Asr
16:59	Maghreb
18:11	'Isa
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetish Tel. 519740	
Assumption of God Church Tel. 632725	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
St. Paul & Silas Church Tel. 661737	
Torrestrata Church Tel. 622566	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 623383, Tel. 628543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 717331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 717361	
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 717151	
Assian International Church Tel. 683320	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811285	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 623864, 624292	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
A relatively warm front will affect the Kingdom Monday, thus bringing to an end the first wave that swept Jordan in the past few days. It will be partly cloudy and relatively warm, and there will be a chance for scattered showers of rain. Winds will be westerly moderate. In Amman, winds will be northerly moderate and rain calm.	
Min./Max. temp.	
Amman	2/9
Aqaba	5/17
Jericho	2/11
Jordan Valley	7/16

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 7, Aqaba 15. Humidity readings: Amman 77 per cent, Aqaba 48 per cent.	
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Bahjat Badr	849362
Dr. Mohammad Abu Zeid	675480
Dr. Adnan Mansour	893344
Dr. Husam Mansour	748364
Firdous pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asmaa pharmacy	637055
Nakoula pharmacy	623672
Al Salim pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shameh pharmacy	637660
ZARQA:	
Dr. Hisham Sharabati	(-) 985417
Khalil pharmacy	985417
EMERGENCIES	
Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	891228
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	943402
Traffic Police	890390
Public Security Department	630221
Hotel Complaints	663800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage	667227
Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality	661174
Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone	623101
Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
JERICO:	
Dr. Omar Tahatani	(-) 273825
Al Sharaf pharmacy	273825

Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
RJ Flight Information	08-53300
Water Authority	661174
Jordan Electricity Authority	615615
Electric Power Company	636381
RA Flight Information	08-53300
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53300
HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalil Maternity, J. Amn.	644281/6
Abdali Maternity, J. Amn.	644241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Mallat, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, J. Amman	664171/4
Shamsi Maternity	669151

JEPSCO workers say they're willing to compromise

AMMAN (J.T.) — Workers employed by the Jordan Electric Power Company (JEPSCO) are pressing their demand for better pay and compensation but are ready for a compromise agreement with management, according to Waleed Khayyat, president of the Union of Electricity Workers in Jordan.

Mr. Khayyat spoke at a press conference Sunday to publicise the grievances of the JEPSCO workers. He also said that 140 of them receive salaries of less than JD100 a month although they are skilled workers of vital importance to the company.

Mr. Khayyat said that the workers are demanding an increase in salaries and compensation due to them before joining the Social Security Corporation (SSC) scheme, introduced in 1980.

Under the previous labour arrangements, each worker is entitled to a month's salary for every year of service before 1980.

Mr. Khayyat said that the union was backing the JEPSCO workers in their demands but was willing to negotiate the situation with management and the board of directors.

The union has approached the board, the company management and the Ministry of Labour to end the dispute but two months have passed and nothing has been done, he said.

Management has expressed solidarity with the workers and said that the case is now in the hands of the JEPSCO board, which has the power to address the situation, according to Mr. Khayyat.

Mr. Khayyat said that the workers were willing to reach a compromise agreement with the JEPSCO board should the latter agree to discuss these demands.

But Mr. Khayyat did not refer to a strike, which the workers had threatened to carry out by the middle of January if their demands are not met. He said that JEPSCO employs some 2,000 workers in various areas within the company's concession zone.

Arab agricultural organisation to help member states achieve food security, official says

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan is taking part in the ministerial meeting of the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD) due to open in Khartoum Tuesday.

The three-day meeting is expected to discuss cooperation among Arab states in agricultural matters with a view to achieving the goals of food security for the Arab World, according to Dr. Fayez Khasawneh, minister of agriculture.

In a statement before his departure for Khartoum to take part in the meeting, Dr. Khasawneh said that the ministers were expected to discuss a number of research papers dealing with agricultural production at the national and pan-Arab levels as well as technical assistance offered by the organisation to Arab member states.

The meeting is also expected to elect a new organisation director general to succeed Hassan Fahmi Juma, whose tour of duty recently ended.

On the agenda is the subject of creating a pan-Arab agricultural development fund with an initial capital of \$1 billion to finance agricultural schemes, according to the minister. Questions related to the adverse effects on the environment due to the extensive



Fayez Khasawneh

use of chemicals, means of combating pests and laws related to quarantines and other techniques used in the agricultural sector will also be reviewed, he added.

Dr. Khasawneh said that the Jordanian delegation will submit a number of studies on agriculture in Jordan and the Kingdom's agricultural cooperation agreements with a number of Arab neighbours as well as the Jordanian agricultural experiment aimed at ensuring food security.

Dr. Khasawneh is accompanied on the trip by two senior ministry officials.



JORDANIAN-CANADIAN RELATIONS REVIEWED: Prime Minister Shariif Zaid Ben Shaker received in his office Sunday Canada's Defence Minister M. Massé, who is now on a tour of the Middle East region. During the meeting, attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Thouqan Hindawi, the two sides reviewed relations between Canada and Jordan and means for boosting bilateral cooperation in various fields. According to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the prime minister and the Canadian minister reviewed the latest developments in the Middle East region. The prime minister also met Dr. Tayseer Abdul Jabher, executive

secretary of the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), for a discussion on ESCWA's activities in Jordan. Dr. Abdul Jabher expressed ESCWA's appreciation for the facilities offered to the organisation in Jordan by the government. In the past year, ESCWA established its regional office on a temporary basis in Amman in view of the current embargo on Iraq, which hosts the permanent regional office. Dr. Abdul Jabher briefed the prime minister on ESCWA's preparations to hold its general ministerial meeting in Bahrain next April.

Rescue crews continue to help residents, evacuate 400 tourists from Petra

By Elias Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The ordeal of 20,000 inhabitants of the southern town of Wadi Mousa, cut off from the world by the snow without electricity and fuel since last Wednesday, was due to end Sunday evening thanks to the efforts of the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA).

Repair teams are determined to restore electric power to the town and the other small villages around it even if they have to work through the evening to accomplish the task, said JEA Director General Mohammad Saeed Arafeh.

He told the Jordan Times that several repair teams were trying to erect five high voltage pylons and electric posts knocked down by the snow storm.

The poles are located in high terrain and cannot be reached by vehicles, forcing the workers to carry their equipment, including scales and ladders, in order to accomplish their task, Mr. Arafeh said.

Mr. Arafeh said that the JVA was trying to restore electricity to all regions. Isolated cases of not still having electricity still remain in the Amman and Irbid areas besides the heavy tasks in the south, which was the worst affected region. Everything will be restored to normal by Tuesday morning, Mr. Arafeh said.

Earlier, Wadi Mousa residents told the Jordan Times that the lack of electric power



Mohammad Saeed Arafeh

has rendered the local petrol station useless, which meant that the town was without electricity and fuel. The callers said that only the Forum Hotel in Petra was functioning because it has its own power generator.

The callers said that Civil Defence Department (CDD) crews were busy at work reopening blocked roads and rescuing stranded citizens but could not provide the generator for the petrol station.

As relief and rescue operations were continuing, about 400 European tourists were reported to have been air lifted to safety from the ancient Nabatean city of Petra after being marooned by snow. Petra is next to Wadi Mousa in the southern regions of Jordan, which was blanketed by heavy snow in the past week.

According to informed



Yassir Hikmat

sources, the visitors were visiting Petra when they were besieged by the snowstorms. Tourism Minister Yassir Hikmat said that by Monday all the European tourists will have been evacuated from the ancient Nabatean city.

"We are flying them to a nearby town where buses take them to Amman," said the minister, adding that he expected the operation to be completed in 24 hours.

According to the minister, the Armed Forces and the Jordanian Royal Air Force as well as the Ministry of Public Works were involved in ensuring the safe return of the tourists.

The 400 tourists, he said, had spent the past five days in the Forum Hotel in Petra. Ministry of Tourism Secretary General Nasri Atallah stressed

that all of them are safe. Mr. Atallah, who was asked to go to Petra Sunday to supervise the evacuation rescue of the tourists, told the Jordan Times from Petra that the tourists were flown Sunday by helicopters to the nearby town of Athroh, where 300 of them were put on board buses on the way to Amman.

Mr. Atallah said that the tourists were of French, British, Italian, German, American and Austrian origin.

Meanwhile, the Armed Forces, CDD crews and other concerned departments Sunday were still busy reopening roads in the south. However, the Jordan Times received repeated complaints about the failure of the municipal services to help reopen side roads in Abu Nuseir, Sweileh and western Amman districts.

The callers said that side roads were still blocked, preventing people from venturing out or going to work in their own cars. For example, inhabitants of the Wadi Seer and Sweileh regions, two of the most affected areas in the snow storm, were given the Operations Room telephone number 811021 to call for help. Some callers said there was no response from that number Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Public Security Department (PSD) announced Sunday that the Amman Governorate witnessed a total of 346 road accidents resulting in one fatality during the past snowstorm. It said 690 vehicles were involved in these accidents.

1991 real estate revenues jump 42% over 1990

AMMAN (J.T.) — Revenues from sales of land and other real estate during 1991 registered an increase of 42 per cent over those of 1990, largely due to increased activity attributed to an influx into the Kingdom of thousands of Jordanian and Palestinian expatriates from Kuwait or the other Gulf states, according to Department of lands and survey Director Ali Al Gharabeh.

Mr. Gharabeh said his department's revenues from the 10 per cent charge on sales amounted to JD 41,755,269 in 1991 compared to JD 24,004,873 in the previous year.

The buying and selling activities during the past year exceeded all expectations, he said. The peak of activities occurred in the summer when the greatest number of transactions were concluded, Mr. Gharabeh said.

He noted that most real estate sold was in Amman and Zarqa regions and the buyers were mainly expatriates returning for permanent settlement. Hundreds of thousands of people converged on Jordan in the wake of the Gulf crisis, many of whom had no homes or land.

According to Mr. Gharabeh, the political stability in the Kingdom, the stable exchange rate of the Jordanian currency and other factors helped to boost the sale of land and homes during the past year.

Many of the expatriates were also reported starting their own businesses, but the majority turned their attention to land and housing, he said. Mr. Gharabeh expressed hope that the new year 1992 will witness more sales of real estate in view of the improved economic political and social atmosphere in the Kingdom.

A survey conducted by the National Centre for Educational Research and Development last month revealed that out of 100,000 expatriates, half wanted to invest in real estate, trade, industry and agriculture.

Less than 30 per cent of the 300,000 returnees had owned homes before their return to the Kingdom, the survey found.

backing to cooperation with Jordan in the field of bolstering ties between the two countries. He also requested that the ambassador convey greetings wishing Jordan continued progress and prosperity to His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and the Jordanian people.

Mr. Tawil also discussed with the Pakistani prime minister prospects for increasing bilateral cooperation in economic and trade fields as well as in matters related to science and industry. Mr. Tawil said that Pakistani investors and joint Jordanian-Pakistani ventures can benefit from the privileges and incentives offered in the Kingdom through the free zones.

The premier voiced his full



Mohammad Nawaz Sharif

Protestors deplore U.N embargo on Iraq

AMMAN (Petra) — Three people representing protestors who are staging a sit-in in front of the United Nations office in Baghdad held a press conference at the Professional Associations Complex here.

They described the suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of the embargo imposed on Iraq. The three protestors said they will be touring a number of Arab countries to deliver messages to representatives of diplomatic missions there.

They called on the Arabs to do their most to provide assistance and immediate aid to the Iraqi children and to the aged Iraqi people who are suffering as a

result of the U.N. sanctions on Iraq.

They noted that 18,000 Iraqi children are at risk of dying any minute because of the embargo.

"They said they sent memoranda to the foreign embassies in Amman calling on them to work for lifting the embargo on Iraq."

Last week, a group of 20 people staged a sit-in in front of the United Nations offices in Shamsani in Amman to protest the embargo on Iraq and demand an early action to lift it.

Two of the group went on a hunger strike for several days until their health conditions deteriorated. The two were admitted to hospital last Sunday.

Bad weather further postpones examinations

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Thouqan Al Hindawi Sunday decided to postpone to Tuesday the first subject of the General Secondary Certificate Examination which was supposed to be held today.

The postponement decision was made due to the current weather situation prevailing in the country. The examination sessions will be held at 10:00 a.m. in days where there are two sessions, particularly for the vocational branches, the second session will be held at noon. The

minister said the postponement decision only affects the previously scheduled Monday session. The remaining sessions will be held according to schedule, he said.

In another development, the University of Jordan decided to postpone holding the examinations scheduled for 9:00 a.m. Sunday and Monday to 11:00 a.m. on the same days. Examinations previously scheduled for 2:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m. will now be held at 3:30, according to the University of Jordan general registrar.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Sudanese officials tour country

AMMAN (Petra) — Sudanese Trade and Supply Minister Ibrahim Ubeidallah and State and Expatriates Minister Othman Mahjoub visited Sunday the Sahab Industrial City. The two Sudanese ministers were briefed by Fayez Subehmat, the director general of the Industrial Estates Corporation, on the establishment and development of the corporation and the services it provides for industrialists. The visiting ministers were accompanied on the visit by Secretary General of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Marwan Awad. The two ministers also visited the Industrial Development Bank (IDB) where they were briefed by Director General Taher Kanaan on the facilities the bank provides to encourage the industrial sector in Jordan. The Sudanese ministers also visited Al Intaj Food and Detergents Manufacturing Company and toured its various sections and departments.

Jordan Valley to mark Arbour Day

AMMAN (Petra) — The northern Jordan Valley region will mark Arbour Day on Jan. 28, the district's celebrations committee decided Sunday. The main celebration of the occasion will be held at the north Jordan Valley region girls Secondary School. On the occasion, the district's Agriculture Department has distributed 7,245 citrus tree saplings, 50,000 grapevine saplings and 50,000 forest tree saplings to citizens and government departments in the district. According to the director of the department, Mustafa Abu Zeid, about 167,000 forest tree saplings will be planted in an area of 753 dunums near Wadi Al Arah Dam.

Legal Committee approves law

AMMAN (Petra) — The Legal Committee at the Lower House of Parliament held a meeting Sunday under the chairmanship of Deputy Hussein Mjalli. The committee approved the 1990 Money Exchange Law as it was referred to it from the government after undergoing several amendments. The committee also approved Temporary Law No. 52 for 1989 and Temporary Law No. 9 for 1989, both regulating money exchange. The committee will meet again on Monday to discuss the 1991 Political Parties Law and Temporary laws No. 49, 11, 24 and 27, all amendments to the Royal Jordanian Law.

Meeting place for Palestinian pilgrims, families arranged

AMMAN (Petra) — Relatives of Palestinian pilgrims who left for Saudi Arabia recently to perform Al Omra pilgrimage can receive them in the pilgrims city in Nimreen Valley as of today, according to an announcement by the Ministry of Awaqaf and Islamic Affairs. The ministry said that those pilgrims, all from Palestinian land occupied in 1948, will leave to the occupied West Bank via Prince Mohammad Bridge instead of King Hussein Bridge, which was closed because of the rising level of water in the Jordan River as a result of the floods and storms which swept the region.

Graduation ceremony held

AMMAN (Petra) — A ceremony was held Sunday at Queen Noor Civil Aviation College to celebrate the graduation of a number of specialists in the affairs of civil aviation, all from the Jordanian Civil Aviation Department, from a course at the college.



PALESTINIAN ANNIVERSARY — Prime Minister Shariif Zaid Ben Shaker Sunday inaugurated the festival held by the embassy of the State of Palestine to mark the 27th anniversary of the Palestinian revolution. Addressing the audience, the Palestinian ambassador to Jordan, Al Tayyeb Abdul Rahim, stressed the importance of Jordanian-Palestinian coordination, saying that it stems from the unique Jordanian-Palestinian relationship. Also, addressing the audience was Dr. Mansouh Al Abbad, chairman of the Jordanian Popular Committee for Supporting the Palesti-

nian Intifada, who led the Palestinian struggle and said that the committee has donated JD 5 million to support the health sector in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Political Department Farouq Qaddoumi addressed the festival, saying that Palestinian participation in the peace process is in line with decisions adopted at the Algiers meetings of the PLO Executive Committee and the Palestine National Council. He lauded Jordanian-Palestinian coordination and stressed the need for further enhancing it.

Rising Jordan River delays archbishop

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The flood waters of the River Jordan held back the Archbishop of Canterbury when he tried to travel to Jerusalem on Sunday.

"The Jordan has flooded its banks and the Allenby Bridge is impassable. They're on their way to the Bridge now," British embassy Chaplain John Parkinson told Reuters.

Archbishop George Carey was due to attend a religious service in Jerusalem at 11 a.m. But it was delayed until 1 p.m. by which time it was hoped the archbishop would be safely across the river from Jordan.

It was not immediately known if Dr. Carey made it to Jerusalem or returned to Amman.

Correction

Due to an editing error, Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey was incorrectly identified as New York Cardinal John O'Connor in the photo captions on pages 1 and 3 of Sunday's issue. The Jordan Times regrets the error.

Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation

cordially invites you to the opening of an exhibition of paintings by **Wijdan Franco de Courten** 6:00 p.m. on Monday January 6, 1992 at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation Gallery The exhibition will continue through January 28, 1992 Saturday-Wednesday 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Thursday 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

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Lessons from Mother Nature

THE HARSH weather conditions that hit Jordan in the past five days were certainly abnormal. This sort of weather, like last year's flood in the south of the country, only occurs once in decades. Yet, the snowstorm and last year's floods have both resulted in great losses, both in life and property. Not only that, but until the writing of these words, whole towns and small communities were cut off from the rest of the country. For the last five days, many thousands of people have had no electricity or heating fuels. Why did roads collapse in last year's floods and why were power lines cut by this year's snowstorm? Officials were heard at both occasions as saying that roads and power lines were not designed to withstand such harsh conditions. Why? One would have thought that a country that invested billions of dinars on its infrastructure would have taken such extreme conditions into consideration to ensure that such a huge investment was not wasted.

We do appreciate the efforts of so many individuals and the concerned authorities. Many people worked very hard day and night in very harsh conditions to rescue people, to extend help to stranded motorists, lift supplies to isolated regions, connect power lines and to clear roads. Each one of those brave people deserve praise and rewards. However, the feeling of many people is that while the media highlighted official achievements, it overlooked the people's plight.

From the floods of the Jordan Valley in 1989 to the floods in the south in 1990 to this year's snowstorm, there has been one pattern. Once the "situation" is over, it gets forgotten. No one bothers to evaluate it or find out its real causes or if there were any shortcomings on behalf of individuals or institutions. This year's snowstorm and the miseries it wrought on some people might still all be repeated without the benefit of experience. Unfortunately, it seems that this is the attitude by which we face all our concerns and problems.

With changes — even weather changes — happening all around us, we need to adapt our ways of thinking, of doing things and of responding to events. We cannot afford but do that. Life itself is change, and unless we emulate it, we will be left behind.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IT WAS only natural for Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to take the decision to delay their presence in Washington for another session of the Middle East peace talks in view of Israel's expulsion of the 12 Arab citizens from their Palestinian homeland, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. How can these countries and the Palestinian delegation embark on talks for peace with Israel at a time when the Israelis are escalating their atrocities against the Palestinian population and building settlements on Arab lands, asked the daily. It said that these parties realise too well that Israel does not want peace and it is doing all it can to abort the peace process. The decision to delay going to Washington was in line with the Arab countries' efforts to safeguard higher national interests, displaying a unity of stand and determination to provide support for the Palestinian people in their just struggle to end Israel's occupation of their lands, said the paper. Israel's expulsion of Arab citizens, its escalation of repression against the Arabs in Palestine, its disregard of U.N. resolutions and its settlement programmes for which it has allocated vast sums in the 1992 fiscal budget, are all indications of the Jewish state's lack of interest to reach peace with its Arab neighbours and its total indifference to the U.N. resolutions which call for exchanging land for peace, added the daily. Israel's atrocities, the paper said, should help pool the Arab countries' resources and forces for the sake of helping the Palestinians regain their usurped lands and their freedom.

A columnist in Sawt Al Shaab daily Sunday bitterly criticised mosque preachers during last Friday's prayers for launching an attack on the non-Islamist groups in Jordan, accusing them of being infidels. It is natural for the Islamists to be joyful over the success of their Islamist friends in Algeria's general elections, but expressing joy should not prompt the Islamists in Jordan to defame the other political parties, said Ahmad Dhiban. The writer said that some preachers had expressed their delight over the success of the Algerian Islamists in a manner that is harmful to the concept of democracy, showing hatred towards the other political groups. The writer reminded the Jordanian Islamists and the mosque preachers that the Muslim Brotherhood, like the other political groups in Jordan, have endorsed the National Charter which guarantees democracy and political pluralism, and said that it was democracy which helped the Islamists acquire parliamentary seats in the general elections of 1989. Dhiban said that the Jordanian Islamists' reaction to the Algerian election results caused apprehension and fear that once the Islamists have seized power in a country they would embark on measures to stifle the voice of the other groups and so nip democracy in the bud. He said the mosque pulpits should not be exploited by those elements who try to cause harm to the national interests.

Weekly Political Pulse

It's time the West acted

MAYBE it is still premature to start thinking in terms of the possible era when the peace process in the Middle East may come to a complete halt. Yet, there is at least a 50-50 chance that the peace talks would become deadlocked over the hard core issues that separate the two sides, especially with regard to the territorial dimension on which Israel is apparently unwilling to offer any meaningful compromises. The odds against a real breakthrough in these talks are accentuated by the new international order where the cards are stacked heavily against the Arab side. Given the fact that there is no semblance of strategic balance between Israel and the Arab World, it would take a miracle or two to realise any accord worth its salt in the immediate or even intermediate period. And miracles do not occur these days even in the holy land where the season for miracles was once the order of the day. So, it would seem prudent to start reflecting as of now on the aftermath of any possible or probable collapse in the peace talks in order to be better prepared for such an eventuality both internally and externally.

Of course, no one in his right mind would pray for the ending of the peace process but one, nonetheless, must be prepared for the worst while hoping for the best. On the domestic front, the repercussions of any defunct peace process would be many profound and multifaceted. For one thing, in a couple of years or less, the country will have national parliamentary elections. There

is little doubt that a failed peace process would be reflected in the outcome of such elections. In this regard, there are those forces or blocs of forces operating within and outside the theatre of Parliament who have already professed disagreement with the peace efforts as repugnant to their ideals. Failure in the peace talks would obviously vindicate such forces and strengthen their share of political power in Parliament.

Another major reaction to any aborted peace talks would necessarily assume economic dimensions as well. For a beginning, a recession would become a sure probability with all that it may entail in terms of unemployment and the accentuation of the gap between the haves and have nots in the country. Socially and culturally, the people may turn inward, seeking guidance and motivation from the past rather than from the present or future. Such reasonably projected consequences could assume many forms and manifestations ranging from the emergence of hardened political trends and thoughts. In turn, the Middle East would become that much more tense and unstable. Above all, the area could become ripe for a series of political earthquakes and domestic turmoil. Even more ominous, the countries of the region could become embroiled in military adventures that they may not want in the first place. And even though the Arab side may not emerge victorious in any such military confrontation, the entire Middle East may still plunge deeper into chaos and extremism

without an end in sight.

In any such eventuality, there is no way to keep the tentacles of instability in the Middle East from reaching the Gulf region and Europe. With despair breeding despair, the stage would be set for greater threats to the new international order.

It would seem therefore that the international community, notably the powers that forged a new international order, would make an extra effort to diffuse the situation in the Middle East on a permanent basis by lending more effective support to the quest for a just and durable peace in the area. The latest remarks by U.S. President George Bush, in the aftermath of the deadlocked Washington Arab-Israeli peace talks to the effect that his country was not about to interfere actively in the peace negotiations between the two sides, is not something that one would wish to hear. Hopefully, such a perspective would not constitute the final word on the subject and, in due course Washington would find that the best interests of the new international order that it has promoted and championed would be better served by an affirmative U.S. policy towards the conflicts of the region. Otherwise, the stage would be set for serious setbacks to the new international order and, in the end, all that the West is trying to construct globally and regionally would become undermined to a fatal extent.

By Waleed Sadi

The debate within the PLO

By Paul Lalor

SINCE the Gulf war, Palestinians have been engaged in a fierce and wide-ranging debate. At first this concentrated on the need for reform within the PLO, the Palestinian national movement, but as the peace process gathered pace, foreign policy increasingly dominated discussions. While Palestinians have come a long way in their response to U.S. peace efforts, they have failed to address important and other longer-term internal problems.

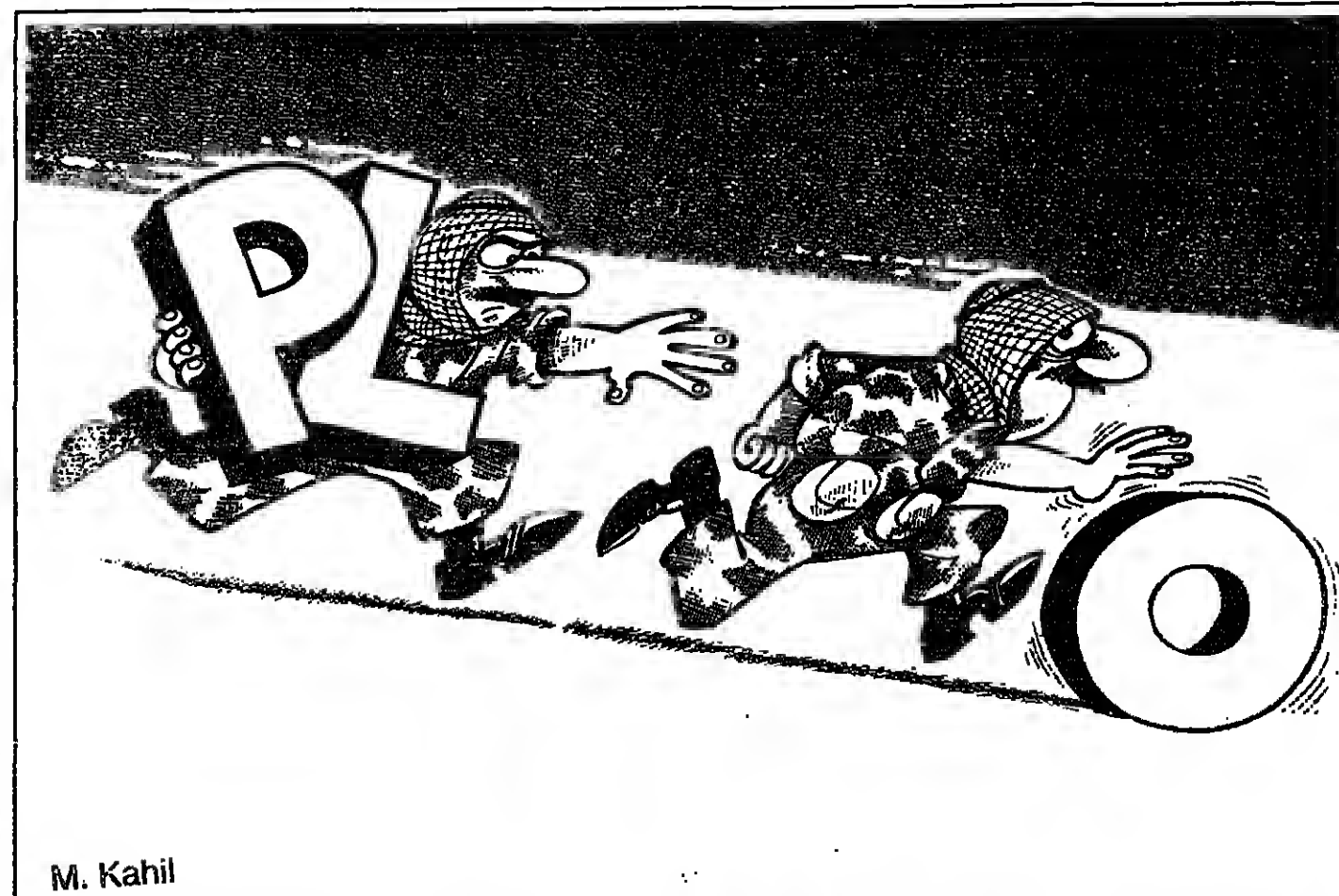
Foreign policy in a changing world

From the outset, the "loyal opposition," Hamas and the Damascus based Salvation Front were against participation in the American-sponsored process. For them, the Gulf war was the latest in a long line of signals showing that while the balance of power lay with Israel and the U.S., Palestinians could not hope for a just settlement of the conflict with Israel. The Palestinians were being asked to "swallow their national demands," the intifada would be brought to an end and, at best, the Palestinian question would be subsumed by a Jordanian option. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) leaders distributed in the occupied territories denounced the U.S. plan as "a conspiracy aimed at bypassing Palestinian national rights." Hamas warned against selling out Palestine.

Israel would withdraw only when it was forced out by political, human and material losses. While awaiting a shift in the regional and international balance of power in their favour, Palestinians were urged to escalate the intifada, strengthen national unity and seek the support of the Arab states.

Reflecting this position, George Habash of the PFLP spoke out strongly against participation in the U.S.-sponsored peace process at September's Palestine National Council (PNC). Following the PLO's decision to say "yes" to the U.S. Mr. Habash carried out his threat to freeze the PFLP's membership of the Executive Committee. In October and November, the PFLP and Hawatme's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) were engaged in talks with Hamas and the Damascus Salvation Front to forge a common front.

Despite widespread sympathy with rejectionist dreams and fears, they were criticised for being out of touch with regional and international realities. The intifada was in crisis and Soviet Jewish immigration and settle-



M. Kahil

ment was continuing. Economic and other pressure of Palestinians to emigrate was increasing and the threat of expulsion seemed very real. The PLO, already weakened by the assassination of Abu Iyad, was bankrupt and its forces had been defeated in Lebanon. And attempts to secure comprehensive national unity within the PLO had failed due to the unreasonable demands of Hamas and the Salvation Front. As well as expelling hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and cutting off financial support to the PLO, the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia were rumoured to be trying to set up an alternative to the Tunis leadership. Syria and Egypt, fresh from the Gulf war, made it clear that they were going along with the American plan whatever the PLO did. Iraq had been removed from the equation and Jordan needed peace to survive.

The gap between Palestinian wishful thinking and realities on the ground was brought home with a vengeance when Faruq Qaddumi unwisely welcomed the coup in the Soviet Union. Thereafter it was clear to most Palestinians that the American game was the only one in town. By the end of the summer, the Palestinian debate was dominated by those who argued that playing would be less painful than staying

in the dressing room.

Pragmatism and optimism

Pragmatists argued that Palestinians would be much better placed to influence the outcome by participation in the peace process. At very least the relationship with the U.S. in the past had given the PLO insights into American thinking and provided a pipeline for the communication of the Palestinian position to a much wider audience. By going along with Washington's plans, Palestinians would be able to exploit Israel's domestic differences over peace, widen the breach between Israel and the outside world and win new friends in the process. And if American efforts were unsuccessful, Palestinians could not be blamed for the failure.

Mr. Qaddumi and others have long argued that the U.S. did not have Europe's guilt about the Holocaust, that it was governed by more purely financial and strategic considerations. With the cold war a thing of the past, the Gulf war showed Israel's limitations as America's policeman in the region. It had also demonstrated America's need for Arab allies to secure its interests there.

Palestinians were urged to exploit linkage between the Gulf crisis and the Arab-Israeli conflict

and the charge of double standards to secure international support. It was also pointed out that the U.S. would have to reward its Arab allies in the war against Iraq. These Arab states needed to shore up their Arab nationalist credentials and legitimise their participation in the conflict.

In the course of negotiations with Secretary of State James Baker, West Bankers Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Hussein, the PLO's principal interlocutors with the Americans, had become increasingly convinced that the U.S. was serious about pressuring Israel: they passed this message on to the PNC in September. American statements about the political rights of the Palestinians were seized upon. Coupled with Mr. Bush's decision to delay the granting of \$10bn in loan guarantees to Israel and the effect this had on American public opinion, there was increasing support among Palestinians for going to the world with their cause.

Less rhetoric and more imagination

In April, an Al Fajr editorial called for a little more creativity and imagination and less rhetoric in Palestinian thinking about the peace process. In this spirit, various Palestinians sought to lay some old fears to rest. The prob-

lem of East Jerusalem could be solved by appointing delegates from villages outside the new Israeli borders but within the old Jordanian boundaries. Mr. Arafat joked that if those who had been born in Jerusalem and no longer lived there were allowed to go this would mean the entire delegation would be from the city. In the event, the presence in Madrid of the advisory team with Faisal Hussein and PLO figures, some of whom were from Jerusalem, made a mockery of Israel's objections and vindicated those who argued for more concentration on form rather than substance. On the danger of Jordanian domination of the proceedings, it was pointed out that this would certainly happen if the Palestinians failed to attend the peace process. Otherwise the King had made it clear that the Jordanian delegation was merely a diplomatic umbrella for Palestinian attendance. The King's performance in the Gulf war and his introduction of democracy made it unlikely that he would renege on his promises. The behaviour of the Jordanian delegation at Madrid proved proponents of this line correct.

As for worries about the outside being split from the inside, the whole world would be aware that the PLO had picked and approved those who were on the

delegation, even if Tunis was not allowed to name them, and the delegation itself was not permitted to clearly state that it was PLO. The appearance of Dr. Ashrawi and Mr. Hussein at September's PNC, and the PLO's adoption of a pragmatic political programme, stamped the Madrid delegates with the PLO mark and emphasised Palestinian national unity. Haider Abdul Shafi, the head of the Palestinian delegation, while sticking to American guidelines and Israeli demands, left nobody in any doubt in Madrid. The presence of Mr. Hussein and Dr. Ashrawi in the advisory team and of Nabil Sha'ath and other PLO advisers in the Spanish capital made the point even more forcefully.

Against this background, Palestinians emphasised the art of the possible. The strategy of stages was revived this time towards a Palestinian state. With this in mind it was argued that Palestinians should exploit international concern with human rights, democracy and freedom. From very early on a freeze on settlements became a central plank of the Palestinian programme. Illegal under international law, there was widespread opposition to them in the world. And after all, if they were not stopped, there would be nothing left to negotiate. Oppressive practices and the illegal actions of Israel in the territories should be given prominence. If the Kurds were to be given international protection, why not make the same case for the Palestinians? Dovetailing with this, Palestinians could also push for the removal of Israeli soldiers from Palestinian population centres and the restoration of normal life. And as a step in the direction of eventually implementing the right of return, they could demand Israeli identity cards for Palestinians expelled from Kuwait who were stranded in Jordan.

At the PNC, while there were protests from George Habash and others, it was evident that there was a widespread realisation that Palestinians would have to pursue this line. Mr. Arafat pointedly referred to the political rights of the Palestinians rather than their national rights. Mr. Hawatme and Mr. Habash were shown to be badly out of touch. And in recent weeks, the PFLP and Hamas have joined with Fatah in calling for the peaceful resolution of the inter-Palestinian conflict. However, though Palestinians have made progress in the approach to the U.S.-sponsored peace process, the pace of internal reforms within the Palestine national movement has been much slower — Middle East International.

Historical Jesus ever elusive

By Peter Steinfels

NEW YORK — For millions of Christians at this time of year, Jesus of Nazareth is as tangible as the figure of a baby in a manger, his message as distinct as the notes of a carol, his presence as close as the prayers whispered during Christmas services. But for many scholars looking not with the eyes of faith but the lenses of historical research, Jesus of Nazareth is an elusive and puzzling figure, one who probably was not born in a stable or even in Bethlehem, whose personal life was a mystery and whose essential message remains subject to vastly different interpretations.

Two new books, major attempts to reexamine the "historical Jesus," illustrate the state of this scholarship and pinpoint critical differences over methods and sources that still produce radically different portraits. In "The Historical Jesus,"

John Dominic Crossan, who teaches Biblical Studies at DePaul University in Chicago, concluded that Jesus was a preacher of peasant egalitarianism. The subtitle of the work is "The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant."

Mr. Crossan argues that the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper and the appearances of the risen Jesus to his disciples are not records of actual events but dramatic visualisations created by the early Christian communities to make concrete their experiences of the continued presence of Jesus after his death.

The other book, "A Marginal Jew," by the Reverend John P. Meier, is more traditional in its conclusions. But because it is only the first of two volumes, its title gives no more than a tantalising hint of the portrait of Jesus yet to come.

The author, a professor of New Testament at Catholic University of America in Washington, does

conclude that Jesus was probably born in between 6 and 4 B.C. in Nazareth, not Bethlehem.

He had four brothers and at least two sisters, as mentioned in the Gospels of Mark and John and the writings of Paul. Father Meier rejects the view, based on later teachings about the virginity of Mary, that these references were really to cousins.

It is possible that Jesus was married, but in Father Meier's estimation he almost certainly chose to be celibate, for religious reasons.

Such conclusions are based on painstaking deductions from the New Testament, other knowledge about the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures in which Jesus and his followers moved and, increasingly, insights borrowed from modern studies of social and religious movements.

Christians have often rejected these scholarly exertions as unnecessary, content in the knowledge that the four Gospels pro-

vide far more documentation of Jesus' words and life than exist for most figures in the ancient world.

But the Gospels are not "works of history in the modern sense," Father Meier says. It is generally conceded that more than three decades passed after Jesus' death before the earliest of them was written. The others date from 10 to 40 years later.

More important, both the Gospels and the written or oral traditions on which they were based were formed "from start to finish," according to Father Meier, by religious faith and by the special concerns and theological interpretations of the different groups of Jesus' followers who had preserved, edited and shaped these memories.

For two centuries, therefore, scholars have been trying to sort out what they felt could be factually established about Jesus from what they felt were the religiously inspired elaborations

or interpretations owed to his followers.

As with the science of evolution, the issue of modern biblical scholarship has divided American Protestantism into fundamentalist and liberal camps.

With some caveats, Roman Catholicism now welcomes Scripture studies, recognising, for instance, that the Gospel accounts of Jesus evolved over the decades after his death.

Polls show that today about one-third of American adults believe everything in the Bible to be literally true. Although gaps and discrepancies in the Gospel accounts have been noted since the second century, many Christians, tutored from childhood in church teachings reconciling these discrepancies, pay them little heed.

For example, the genealogies of Jesus and the stories surrounding his birth are significantly different in the Gospel of Matthew, with its wise men and flight

into Egypt, and the Gospel of Luke, with its Roman census, manger scene, shepherds and peaceful return to Nazareth.

Christian piety has welded the two accounts together into a single story. But most scholars consider these stories to be forms of literary invention accepted in the ancient world, symbolic creations echoing older Scripture and underlining different theological points.

In recent years, different scholars have sketched the historical Jesus as a political rebel, an ancient magician, a maverick Pharisee, a Jewish prophet announcing that God was about to restore Israel and a Hellenistic gadfly with no mission beyond questioning the world's conventions.

Mr. Crossan, like Father Meier a Roman Catholic, calls the variety of Jesuses produced by scholars "an academic embarrassment." — New York Times.

Mideast peace talks on hold

(Continued from page 1)

Fourth Geneva Convention," he said.

Mr. Arafat and the PLO's foreign affairs chief, Yasser Kaddumi, arrived in London from Damascus on Sunday. Mr. Arafat spoke to reporters after talks with Prime Minister Shafiq al-Rifai.

He said the PLO was trying to maintain close coordination with Jordan, Egypt and Syria, key parties in the peace process, to take a unified stand at the Security Council and secure a firm international resolution before peace talks resume.

Israel's peace team was preparing to leave for the U.S. capital Sunday despite the Arab move.

Asked about appeals from the United States to reconsider the expulsion order, Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens insisted the move was necessary to curb a wave of attacks in the occupied territories.

"We are committed to taking all steps that are likely to spare lives, and this we have explained to the Americans," Mr. Arens said on Israel Radio. "There is no room for debate about this."

In Cairo, Mr. Arafat met for two hours with President Hosni Mubarak. He also met separately with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mousa and Mr. Mubarak's aide, Osama Al Baz.

Mr. Mousa said Israel's expulsion order goes "against the peace process and its spirit."

"It has to be understood that as much as we are interested in peace, we are also interested in Israel stopping its actions which are against peace," Mr. Mousa told the news conference.

Mr. Arafat said his talks with Mr. Mubarak were mainly concerning the present impasse facing the Washington bilateral talks and how the Palestinians should deal with it. He also thanked Mr. Mubarak for his efforts.

A senior political aide to Arafat, Nabil Shaath, was quoted by the Israeli Haaretz daily Sunday as saying that the Palestinians will not boycott the Washington peace talks. But he did not say when or under what conditions the delegates will show up for the talks.

Dr. Shaath, who attended the talks with Mr. Arafat, declined to elaborate on this. Dr. Shaath was one of the Palestinian advisors the United States refused to give visas to attend the second round of bilateral talks in Washington in December.

He told reporters that the American administration has finally approved his visa request but that he did not yet have the visa stamped in his passport yet.

The expulsion decision drew

unusually harsh condemnations from Russia, Britain, France and a host of other nations.

Diplomatic sources said the United States was likely to support a Security Council resolution condemning the expulsion as long as it was limited to that issue alone and did not turn into a more generalised condemnation of Israel.

Such a resolution would go some way towards assuaging Palestinian anger, and officials said it could help ensure that the delay in the peace talks would be brief, perhaps as short as two or three days.

Israel

(Continued from page 1)

from the occupied territories, an illegal decision with regard to international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention," read an official EC statement.

"The community and its member states strongly reiterate their demand for Israel to fully meet with its obligations towards the residents of the occupied territories and to abide by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention," the statement added.

"They condemn violence from whatever quarters it may come and call upon the parties concerned to refrain from taking any measure which would risk jeopardising the peace process," the EC said.

China also urged Israel to reverse its expulsion decision.

"We urge the Israeli side to reconsider the decision and stop the deporting," the official Xinhua news agency said, quoting Foreign Ministry spokesman.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees also expressed regret over the Israeli move.

"I deeply regret the decision by the Israeli authorities to deport 12 Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza and I appeal for a reversal of this decision," UNRWA Commissioner-General Ilter Turkmen said at UNRWA headquarters in Vienna.

Clinton supports loan guarantee

A leading U.S. Democratic presidential candidate, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, said Sunday he backed granting Israel up to \$10 billion in loan guarantees to finance the immigration of Soviet Jews.

"We need to send a signal that we're going to maintain our commitment to freedom for the Jews who live in that part of the world," Mr. Clinton said of Jews from the former Soviet Union in an NBC Television interview.

By Philippa Neave

NEW YORK — In the early days of oil exploration, drilling was very much a case of hit or miss. Scientists would look for obvious features on the surface of the earth and oil companies would drill, hoping for a strike. But those days are long gone and recent advances in geophysical technologies are providing petroleum companies with possibly the most valuable tool they have ever had: precise three-dimensional images of the rock layers thousands of feet thick, lying more than half a kilometre beneath the surface of the water.

In the far corners of the earth, the search for oil has moved increasingly offshore and into deeper and deeper waters. New methods and sophisticated equipment aboard custom-made ships can now produce a very precise picture of geological formations. Oil companies are willing to pay for information that can save time and help prevent expensive mistakes. New techniques, combined with high capacity computers and advanced graphics, now enable scientists to study a portion of the earth's subsurface as a "cube" rather than as a series of cross-sections.

Known as seismic analysis, the 3-D mapping technique has been spearheaded by Western Atlas, a Houston-based company that has been a key player in the increasingly lucrative business of plotting the earth's subsurface since the 1930s. Now the world's largest seismic mapping company, Western Atlas has recently taken delivery of the first of four custom-built ships equipped with state-of-the-art technology. Costing some \$40 million each, the new vessels will be the flagships of the existing fleet of 30 craft and promise to provide some of the best quality images to date.

"The technology on the boats we are putting out will dramatically improve both the quantity and the quality of data we can acquire," said Amir Skerl, executive vice-president of Western Atlas International, a division of Litton Industries which has operations worldwide.

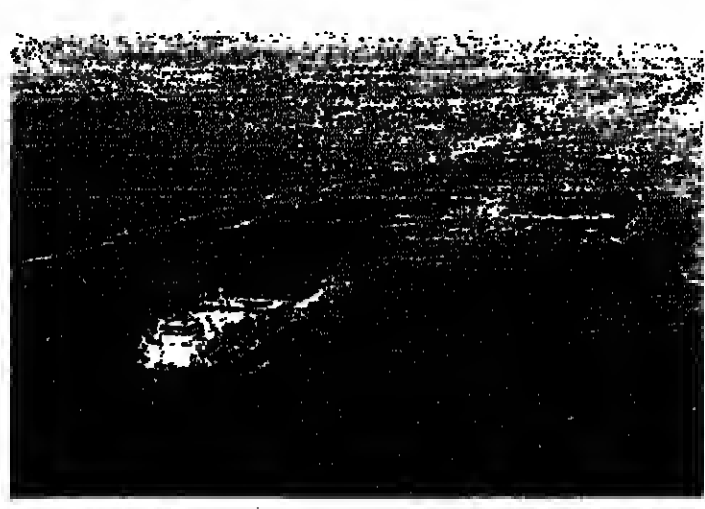
Seismic mapping works by triggering a powerful sound, sending acoustic energy into the ground. The echoes produced by underground rock layers are picked up by seismic sensors, called hydrophones, which act like microphones to record music. The sensors send out electronic signals which are recorded on a magnetic tape. The tape is then submitted for computer analysis. Different rock formations produce different "sounds" depending on the density and porosity of the rock and a host of other factors.

For marine exploration, ships are fitted with air guns that fire signals regularly, every 12 or 15

seconds. Several guns can be fired simultaneously—to a precision of one quarter of a millisecond. The echoes are captured by hundreds of sensors on cables, known as streamers which are up to four miles long and are towed behind the ship. Each streamer cable has thousands of hydrophones. The latest models can tow up to four streamers running parallel, at intervals of between 15 and 50 metres. The ship travels back and forth over a given area, rather like a lawn mower on a football field. In one

much more precise and faster overall image than ever before. The combination of technological advances is very exciting.

Western was recently awarded the largest ever 3-D mapping contract, by an oil company whose name has not been revealed, to cover 400,000 line-kilometres of sea floor in northern Europe. "What we give the oil company is an accurate description of what the sub-surface looks like. It is up to the company to analyse the information and evaluate the risks," said Mr. Skerl.



Searching for oil under the sea floor, a Western Atlas International seismic exploration ship tows a pair of 5-kilometre long hydrophone-studded cable (World News Link photo)

of the latest developments, Western Atlas has begun to use fiber-optic cables, says Yugoslav-born Skerl. "With fiber-optic cables, we get three or four times more information than with conventional cables. The goal is to enhance the quality and quantity of the data we acquire at any one time. This lowers the cost and improves the energy efficiency at the later stages of exploration for drilling operations and the finding of oil."

"For the first time we are using digital conversion techniques that improve the resolution of the signals we get," added the 51-year-old geophysicist. The staggering amount of data collected on board is sent to one of Western's computer processing centres in Houston, Denver, Calgary in Canada, London or Singapore. Western is now using new very high density magnetic cartridges to record information rather than the more conventional but cumbersome reels of magnetic tape.

"These large volume of information is processed in supercomputers," explained Mr. Skerl. "This is an area where we have made major improvements over the past five or six years with the development of large vector computers, high-speed work stations and advanced graphics. The combination of fiber-optics and computer technology is a powerful set-up for the 1990s. We are able to produce results that give a

Skerl. "In many cases, there have been wells drilled already and they have ascertained that there is oil but what is missing is that they don't know how the oil is distributed. Our information provides them with an excellent tool to see what the reservoir looks like."

Three-dimensional imaging can also help determine the lifespan of a "mature" or already exploited reservoir and evaluate risks such as rock beds collapsing. There are other safety considerations. "We are now better equipped to predict problems such as overpressure to prevent blow-outs and other disasters, we can see and measure this kind of thing in advance," said Mr. Skerl.

Another positive effect, not only in terms of cost, but also for the environment, is that with better knowledge of a reservoir, oil companies drill fewer wells. Said Mr. Skerl: "One of the things you can do with 3-D is drill multiple wells very accurately from a single location (i.e. a platform). You can drill 20 or 30 wells and build only one structure. With a 3-D survey, you can position your central point on the right spot. Fewer wells producing more oil by implication means a safer, better operation."

The first 3-D survey was conducted in 1976, using fairly simple techniques and a good many assumptions. In early days, operations known as "postage stamp surveys" were expensive

and limited to small areas.

Today a typical survey covers thousands of square miles. Cost depends on the type of ship that is used, the area, how congested it is, how harsh the climate is and whether there are drilling platforms in the way. "To our client, the vessel will cost \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million a month. But compared to that, one offshore drilling in the wrong place could cost anything between \$15 and \$20 million. The cost is offset very easily when you consider development costs will be lower and in a shorter time frame," noted Mr. Skerl.

A typical survey now takes two or three months to map 1,600 square kilometres of ocean floor, more for an especially large operation. Helicopters or supply ships pick up the recorded cartridges every two weeks and send them to the computer processing centre. The benefits of acquiring 3-D images of a prospective area are such that some 70 to 80 per cent of offshore wells are now sunk in the early development stages on the basis of such studies. All deep water wells being drilled today are being drilled as a result of 3-D information.

Other technological advances are being applied in the industry, further reducing the risk of error. Said Mr. Skerl: "There has been big progress in what we can position so that we can accurately plot the position of the ship and of all the equipment we are trailing behind." Crews rely on what is known as the "Global Positioning System" (GPS), a satellite-based navigation system. "With this satellite technology we can do things we could not do only a few

years ago. A customer can go to the area and pin-point a location accurately. We can say within one metre where the boat is at any point in time."

One of the most spectacular effects of 3-D imaging is that oil companies can actually monitor and guide their drilling as the drill sinks into the ground. With the 3-D image of the rock formations on their computer screens, technicians can see precisely what is happening while the drilling is going ahead.

The new technologies are also useful in identifying gas reserves.

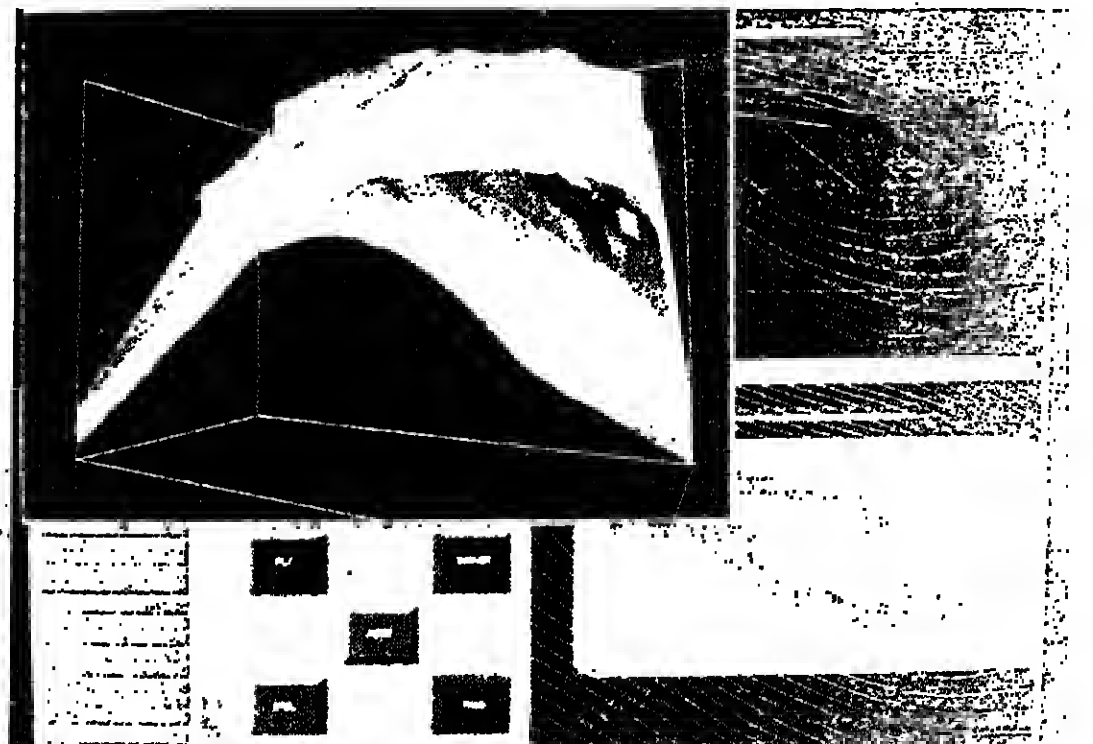
"3-D imaging works extremely well with gas," said Mr. Skerl. "We can detect gas directly from seismic data. We can see it. Gas has a very low density and creates a very strong acoustic boundary and a very strong, direct impact on the strength of the signal we get back. We can see gas in what we call a 'bright spot' on the seismic section and we also get information about pressure. We can't tell if it is good gas, but we know it is gas. Oil, however, cannot be seen as clearly because it bears a similar density to water."

With large chunks of the globe still virgin territory, the future looks bright for Western Atlas and its seismic division. Western Geophysical, as well as for the other major seismic mapping companies—Schlumberger and Halliburton. The Soviet Union is top of the list, says Mr. Skerl, who was there very recently, discussing projects at the highest levels. "With decentralisation and pressing economic needs, the Soviet oil and gas resources look like the best and fastest way for them to get back on their feet. We have talked to the people

now in power and they will do the best they can to accelerate the process of creating a market-based oil and gas industry." The republics of the former Soviet Union are the world's largest oil producer, but there are still vast untapped resources. One gas field alone in Western Siberia is estimated to be 100 kilometres long, while exploration of potentially vast reserves in the north and east of the Caspian Sea has been the subject of agreements between Western Atlas and the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Other promising areas are South America, Mexico, the West coast of Africa, in particular off Nigeria, Gabon and Angola, as well as Indonesia, Malaysia, India and Australia," said Mr. Skerl. Now all the North Western shelf of Australia is covered 3-D. All of Malaysia's development is done with 3-D; for the past three years, Indonesia has gone with an extremely aggressive development programme. Thailand and India are also doing tremendous 3-D surveys. "Western Atlas has also been working with Brazil where it has been conducting deep water 3-D surveys for the past four years."

Mr. Skerl believes his and other seismic mapping companies will be busy for many years to come. He is enthusiastic: "If you read everything that has been printed since the 1930s, you will see that every ten years they predicted that the oil would run out and we had only 15 years worth of reserves. It is always the same story, but there is more oil today than in 1968 and the price is lower in real dollar terms. I think there is a lot more oil out there to be found." — World News Link.



Bottom right, seen through a computer monitor, geological structure thousands of feet below the surface of the earth (World News Link photo)

Iraq to seek higher oil sales

(Continued from page 1)

war reparations and U.N. operations allocations are set aside, is also expected to renew a demand for a moratorium on war reparations and press for round-the-clock unrestricted access to all documents pertaining to the channelling of funds, according to the sources.

Iraq has also been demanding that the West lift the freeze on Iraqi assets held abroad. Over \$4 billion in Iraqi assets are held in the West.

The U.N. is anxious to ensure that Iraq accepts the oil deal so that the world body can finance its Gulf crisis-related operations. Other countries are looking forward to settling the war reparations process in motion with the 30 per cent allocation from the expected Iraqi oil sale proceeds.

The Iraqi government, which has consistently rejected the U.N.-approved deal, has nevertheless been involved in discussions with several of its traditional oil customers since September 1991 for possible deals under the one-time sale.

"Iraq will also demand that it be permitted to enter long-term contracts with buyers regardless of the one-time sale," said another source familiar with Iraqi thinking ahead of the Vienna talks, which began Wednesday.

"Baghdad believes that it should be allowed to resume its role as a key supplier in the international oil market," said the source. "In addition, it also believes that if the proper mechanism could be worked out, the one-time sale could be turned into the return of Iraq to the market."

While the U.N. guidelines stipulate that all the Iraqi oil covered under the deal should pass through pipelines to Turkey's Mediterranean ports, Iraq will seek to amend this clause to include the Mina Al Bakr facility in the Gulf in a bid to avoid paying at least part of the high transit charges demanded by Turkey.

Mina Al Bakr was heavily damaged during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. The facility was partly repaired since the ceasefire in the

war in August 1988, but was again damaged in the war over Kuwait last year. Iraqis gave priority to repairing the facility, which is almost operational now, according to the sources.

Mina Al Bakr is given strategic importance by the Iraqis since the facility is more convenient for Iraq's traditional oil buyers in Asia, such as Japan and India. According to reports from New York, U.N. officials would agree to the Iraqi request to use Mina Al Bakr for exports if the Iraqis could offer proper monitoring facilities.

Kofi Annan, a senior U.N. finance official, will head the world body's side in the Vienna talks. The main snag in the Vienna discussions could be the Iraqi demand to raise the amount (of permitted oil sales) to \$2.4 billion," said a diplomatic source. "Any such raising of the ceiling has to be referred back to the Security Council for approval and this could prove to be a long drawn-out process."

According to Iraqi sources, oil facilities in Iraq have been repaired to the extent that the country can export up to 1.18 million barrels per day, going up to two million in four to six months.

The 960-kilometre twin pipeline from the northern oil fields of Iraq to Turkey's Mediterranean terminals has not been damaged in the allied bombing during the war, but the Iraqis have not reached a final agreement with the Turks on the transit fees for the U.N.-approved oil exports. This is an issue that could be brought up by the Iraqis during the Vienna discussions with a request for U.N. intervention with the Turks.

Over eight million barrels of Iraqi oil are still in the pipelines through Turkey in addition to 1.58 million barrels in 12 tanks at the Turkish terminal of Yumurtalik, according to Iraqi sources.

Close to another 30 million barrels remain in two other pipelines, running through Saudi territory to the Red Sea port of Yanbu, but prospects of marketing this stock is impossible as long as Iraq-Saudi political relations remain strained.

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Financial Markets
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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (December 30, 1991 — January 3, 1992)

AMMAN — The dollar continued to fluctuate within wide margins last week, in this choppy trading in view of the holiday season, as low volume contributed to the sharp currency movements. At the end of the week, the dollar was an average of 1.51 per cent higher against European currencies and one per cent lower against the yen.

Monday took the U.S. unit marginally higher against European currencies, as it was boosted by a sharp rise in U.S. stock and bond prices that offset the bearish sentiment towards it. The decline in U.S. consumer confidence in December was better than expected. Sterling fell towards 2.8330 marks, its floor in the European exchange rate mechanism, arousing speculation of potential intervention to support it. Against the yen, the dollar dropped on expectations of a rise in its Japanese counterpart in the near future, while the Bank of Japan's widely expected 0.5 per cent discount rate cut had no effect on exchange rates.

While trading volume declined further on the last day of 1991, the dollar dropped Tuesday as expectations of a higher yen dominated. Consensus over developments in the former Soviet republics and the lifting of price controls encouraged traders to cover their short dollar positions, and prevented further dollar declines. The U.S. currency thus ended 1991 at its lowest closing level for the week against European currencies at 1.5170 marks and \$1.8685 to the pound sterling, and at its lowest level for the year against the yen at 124.78 yen.

After foreign exchange markets closed on the first day of the new year, the dollar rallied against its European counterparts Thursday and Friday. Market participants were unanimous that dollar's rebound was due to the mark's weakness, mainly against the yen, accentuated by three main factors; namely, the continued expectations of a higher yen to counter the expected rise in the Japanese trade surplus, concerns over negative repercussions to price rises in the former Soviet republics, and a statement by the German economics minister in which he alluded to the weakening German economy.

In the U.S., November's factory orders rose by an expected 0.6 per cent, leaving a muted effect. The dollar thus ended the week at its highest closing levels for the week against European currencies, but lower against the yen against which it closed Thursday at its lowest closing level for the week at 124.38 yen.

Analysts reflected that the dollar's rebound last week was largely technically motivated. As for this week, some observers maintain that technical factors will continue to dominate until the release of January's U.S. employment reports next Friday. The U.S. unit is then expected to trade within 1.51 and 1.555 marks until then, while the yen is expected to continue to rise with some forecasts pointing to 123 yen to the dollar as the next target.

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	27/12/91 NEW YORK Close	31/12/91 NEW YORK Close	Percent Change
Sterling Pound	1.8742	1.8490	(1.34%)
Deutsche Mark	1.5188	1.5430	(1.57%)
Swiss Franc	1.3516	1.3748	(1.67%)
French Franc	5.1900	5.2875	(1.91%)
Japanese Yen	125.70	124.65	1%

USD Per STG

Euro-Currency Interest Rates

Currency	1-Month (%)	3-Month (%)	6-Month (%)	1-Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	4.56	4.31	4.06	4.25
Sterling Pound	10.81	10.81	10.50	10.56
Deutsche Mark	9.37	9.42	9.37	9.37
Swiss Franc	5.25	7.87	7.81	7.93
French Franc	10.31	10.09	10.15	9.79
Japanese Yen	6.18	5.40	5.56	5.15

Interest rates for deposits exceeding 100,000 dollars or equivalent.

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	.677	.679
Sterling Pound	1.2501	1.2564
Deutsche Mark	.4382	.4404
Swiss Franc	.4920	.4945
French Franc	.1285	.1291
Japanese Yen	.5472	.5454
Dutch Guilder	.3894	.3913
Swedish Krona	.1202	.1208
Italian Lira	.0581	.0584
Belgian Franc	.02128	.02139

Per 100

S. Arabia projects \$48b budget for 1992

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia's finances appear to be back on track after two years of severe strain that forced the kingdom to borrow abroad for the first time last year, economists and diplomats in the kingdom said on Sunday.

Commenting on a record 181 billion riyals (\$48 billion) budget announced by King Fahd Thursday, they said that only an oil price upheaval could disrupt the new buoyancy in the Saudi economy.

Saudi Arabia says it spent an unbudgeted \$62 billion in 1990 and 1991 when it helped finance the U.S.-led military campaign to drive Iraq from Kuwait.

Bankers said this covered the bulk of Saudi Arabia's war-

related costs and the kingdom would have no problem in raising on the domestic market the 30 billion riyals (\$8 billion) budget deficit projected for 1992.

A substantial rise in oil production is largely behind the projected increase in government revenues to 151 billion riyals (\$40 billion), a 28 per cent increase on budgeted revenue for each of the previous two years.

Oil experts calculate that this translates into \$36 billion of oil earnings in 1992, slightly below those estimated for 1991 and well within oil market expectations.

Because of Gulf war uncertainties, Riyadh did not publish a budget in 1991, basing expenditure on 1990 projections.

The king said the kingdom had

already arranged to borrow the funds necessary to finance its 1992 budget shortfall.

The bankers said that weekly treasury bill issues of 1.5 billion riyals (\$400 million), which started in November, should be more than adequate.

They saw little need for foreign borrowing in 1992. The kingdom borrowed abroad for the first time in 1991, raising \$4.5 billion from international banks.

Domestic borrowing would probably be enough not only to finance the 1992 deficit but also to pay for loans maturing from 1988 and 1989 that could total between eight and 16 billion riyals (\$2 to \$4 billion), they added.

The government said that the

Gulf war meant actual spending in 1990 and 1991 reached 472 billion riyals (\$126 billion), double budgeted expenditure for the two years.

Diplomats said the United States, for example, had been paid \$16 billion in the past two years. The remaining \$1.5 billion of war-related debt was expected to be sent to Washington very shortly.

One intriguing figure given by the king is of 52 billion riyals (\$13.9 billion) committed to "vital projects" which he did not specify. This was over and above the ordinary expenditure of 129 billion riyals (\$34.4 billion).

Diplomats dismissed speculation that it might be mainly for arms purchases but said the funds

could well cover some military infrastructure such as airports and roads.

The budget allocates 54 billion riyals (\$14.5 billion) for military and security spending, the single biggest item. It compares with \$1.4 billion riyals (\$13.7 billion) for each of the previous two years.

Massive quantities of weapons bought by Saudi Arabia since the end of the Gulf war are to be delivered over several years and their budget impact would be spread over many years, the diplomats said.

King Fahd said the budget priorities were for infrastructure and improving services for the kingdom's eight million nationals.

Syria eases hard currency measures

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria is easing hard currency regulations as part of a drive to encourage more tourists to visit the country, Tourism Minister Adnan Qouli said Sunday.

He told reporters visitors could bring up to \$5,000 in or out of Syria without declaring it to customs.

A regulation requiring visitors to change \$100 at the official rate of 11.20 Syrian pounds has also been abolished.

Visitors can now change money at the so-called neighbouring countries rate of 42 Syrian pounds to the dollar. The official rate is still enforced but only for official dealings, economic sources said.

Anyone bringing in more than \$5,000 must declare it on arrival and show bank receipts for the money changed when they leave. Visitors can bring in as much Syrian currency as they want but not take it out.

Mr. Qouli said the amount Syrians could take out of the country undeclared had been doubled from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Syrians going to Lebanon and Jordan can take up to 5,000 Syrian pounds, up from 1,500 previously. They are not allowed to take hard currency to the two countries where they can use the Syrian pound.

Other measures to boost tourism include encouragement to the private and joint private-public sectors to invest in hotels, restaurants and other projects.

All such projects have been granted a seven year tax-free period from the first year the company makes profit. All materials imported for tourist purposes are also exempted from tax and customs fees.

Economic sources said the new regulations were part of currency measures aimed at improving the productivity of the private sector and encouraging exporters.

Recent laws allowed exporters to keep 75 per cent of their earnings in hard currency in use for importing goods.

Only 36% expect U.S. economy to improve this year



Carlos Andres Perez

Venezuela to boost social spending to \$7.3b

CARACAS, Venezuela (R) — Venezuela, plagued by growing civil unrest, will increase spending on social programmes nearly five times to a total of \$7.3 billion in 1992, President Carlos Andres Perez has said.

In recent years, the average amount spent on the sector was \$1.5 billion a year.

Mr. Perez said social services had declined from "years of neglect, of profound indolence" and that Venezuelans were justifiably angry at the state of their nation.

"The people are right when they complain," he said.

He called for a "social megaproject" to improve health care and education and to improve water, sewage and transport facilities throughout the country. Crime fighting also would be stepped up, the president said.

Mr. Perez's announcement appeared aimed at quelling social unrest that in recent months led to violent demonstrations in many Venezuelan cities and sparked rumours of an impending coup.

There is widespread discontent here because of the inflation and joblessness that have accompanied economic reforms.

Mr. Perez said the increased social spending would be financed in part by money gained from the sale of state-owned companies and by loans.

He also said minimum wages would be raised by 30 per cent to about \$115 a month in the cities and \$100 a month in the rural areas.

NEW YORK (Agencies) — Only 36 per cent of Americans surveyed by a Time/CNN poll think U.S. economic conditions will get better in the next 12 months.

The same percentage think the economy will be unchanged, while 25 per cent think it will get worse, Time said.

"U.S. consumers seem suddenly disillusioned with the American dream of rising prosperity even as capitalism and democracy have consigned the Soviet Union to history's trash heap," the magazine reports.

The Time/CNN poll also shows 65 per cent of Americans do not believe the United States is in a long-term economic decline, but a nearly identical percentage (62 per cent) believe U.S. citizens cannot enjoy in 1992 the same standard of living as recent generations.

According to 84 per cent of those polled, the recession is still going on in the area where they live, and 79 per cent say the recession has caused them to cut back on their spending.

Meanwhile, being rich and paying no federal U.S. income tax is not as easy as it used to be. But it still can be done.

In fact, 397 couples and individuals with incomes of \$200,000 or more showed no tax liability when they filed their returns in 1989, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) said in a report. Their income totalled \$229 million — an average of \$575,000 each.

Another 4,192 high-income tax return filers paid less than five per cent of their earnings to the government; 8,495 paid between five per cent and 10 per cent and 19,114 paid a federal tax between 10 per cent and 15 per cent.

All told, 32,198 couples and individuals with annual incomes of \$200,000 or more paid less than 15 per cent of their earnings in federal taxes. On the other hand, more than eight of every 10 of the 737,659 high-income people paid between 20 per cent and 30 per cent.

The IRS found 2,377 returns reported incomes between \$100,000 and \$200,000 but paying no tax.

The 397 of the richest Americans who paid no tax on 1989 returns compares with 472 in 1988 and 595 in 1987. The IRS has been reporting on high-income non-taxpayers since 1977, when there were 53. The peak year was in 1986, when 613 were reported.

Japan asserts itself as world's top investor

TOKYO (Agencies) — Japan was the world's top foreign investor in 1990 when its firms spent a total \$48 billion on investment abroad, the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) has said.

Japanese direct investment overseas accounted for 22.1 per cent of the world's total, up from 21.2 per cent in 1989 when Japan first clinched top place, said JETRO in an annual report.

The figure of \$48 billion is a rise of 8.8 per cent over the previous year, said the government's trade monitoring body.

The United States ranked number two with \$33.4 billion in foreign investments in 1990, up 0.1 per cent over the previous year, the report said.

The 12-member European Community came in third with \$29.4 billion up by 5.1 per cent.

Overall foreign investment worldwide totalled \$217.2 billion in 1990, up by 4.6 per cent, JETRO said, adding that the pace of growth was declining.

Foreign investment around the world grew by 51.6 per cent in 1987, 23.1 per cent in 1988 and 23.7 per cent in 1989.

In terms of accumulated investment, Japan ranked third after the United States and Britain for a 20-year period up to 1990, the

report said.

Daiwa Securities Co. said in another report that Japanese companies, with less cash on hand and fewer attractive targets, spent 79 per cent less in 1991 on buying or merging with foreign corporations.

The spending amounted to 434.9 billion yen (\$3.46 billion), Daiwa added.

The number of foreign merger and acquisition cases also dropped 34 per cent from 1990 to 259 in 1991, it said.

One of the major moves in 1991 was capital participation worth 133 billion yen (\$106 billion) in Time Warner Inc. of the United States by Japan Toshiba Corp. and C. Itoh and Co.

Daiwa officials said conditions for financing foreign mergers and acquisitions deteriorated rapidly during the year, and foreign companies lost their attractiveness because of their waning profitability.

Meanwhile, they said, mergers and acquisitions of Japanese companies by foreign corporations fell 18 per cent to 14 cases in 1991. The total spending involved, however, soared 731 per cent to 177.9 billion yen (\$1.4 billion).

Another survey by a leading economic newspaper said that

Japanese firms were cutting back on capital spending in North America due to the recession in the United States.

The survey by the national Nihon Keizai Shimbun of 208 Japanese subsidiaries in the United States and Canada showed a planned 16.9 per cent cutback to \$1.769 billion in equipment and plant investments for the Japanese fiscal year 1991, beginning April 1 and ending March 31, 1992. The drop follows a 2.6 decline in fiscal 1990, it said.

The drop was a result of cutbacks by almost all firms, including 17 auto and auto parts companies, as well as electronic goods makers such as Toshiba Corp. Toshiba slashed investments by a third in fiscal 1990, the survey found.

The recession in the United States has made increased investments unattractive. Most Japanese firms also remain cautious due to the yen's recent fall against the dollar, it said.

The survey said an exception to the overall trend was NEC Corp. The electronics giant is investing \$355 million to expand a semiconductor plant in the United States.

The top Japanese investor in North America in 1990 was Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., followed by the restaurant chain Kyotaru Co. and Daishowa Paper Manufacturing Co., the Nihon Keizai reported.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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Georgia remains in tense standoff

TBILISI, Georgia (AP) — An uneasy standoff held Sunday after rebel leaders said they would not storm the parliament building where Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia remained barricaded.

"I was sitting in jail for 11 months under Gamsakhurdia. Let him sit in his bunker for 11 months if he wants. There will be no storming unless it is provoked by Gamsakhurdia's supporters," rebel leader Dzhaba Ioseliani said Saturday.

At least 73 people have been killed and about 400 wounded in two weeks of fighting between Mr. Gamsakhurdia's loyalists and the opposition, which accuses him of seizing dictatorial powers and violating human rights.

On Sunday, the rebels released a separatist leader from prison in a bid to broaden their support, the independent Interfax News Agency reported.

Torez Kulumbegov had been jailed by Mr. Gamsakhurdia's government for his activities in South Ossetia, a small corner of the republic where an ethnic minority is trying to break away from Georgia, Interfax said.

On Saturday, pro-Gamsakhurdia forces failed to take over or disable a TV tower held by the rebels. The president's troops used a T-55 tank in the skirmish, and at least one rebel was killed.

The rebels have used the broadcasting tower to urge Georgians to obey the military council they formed Thursday. The council has claimed control over the former Soviet republic of 5.4 million people and has banned demonstrations.

It also has urged Georgians and South Ossetians to end their ethnic conflict and has promised that military rule of Ossetia would be brief.

Meanwhile, members of the opposition's military council told reporters that, contrary to rumours, they were not planning to firebomb or storm the parliament building.

"We have the force to take the parliament without (burning it with) gasoline, but we don't want to spill blood and to act like a dictator," rebel National Guard Commander Tengiz Kitovani said at a news conference.

Mr. Kitovani also said he had a videotape showing schoolchildren being rounded up and taken to government houses as hostages, Radio Russia reported. There was no independent confirmation of the report.

Mr. Gamsakhurdia is defended by several hundred loyal troops. The fighting has devastated nearby buildings along Rustaveli Prospekt, the once graceful, tree-lined main street of the Georgian capital.

Mr. Kitovani also indicated that the rebels were softening their long-standing opposition to the presence of several thousand former Soviet troops in Georgia. "They do not bother us," Mr. Kitovani said.

The troops have not taken part in the political violence that has wracked Georgia for months. Both opposition and government leaders have insisted the troops must leave Georgia.

Mr. Kitovani's statement raised the possibility the troops might soon throw their support to him. Georgia and the Baltics are the only former Soviet republics that have not joined the new Commonwealth of Independent States.

In Moscow, Georgia's foreign minister, Murman Omanidze, told reporters Saturday that Mr. Gamsakhurdia had brought Georgia "to the brink of ruin" and should resign to avoid further violence.

"At the moment, reconciliation is impossible and Gamsakhurdia is doomed," Interfax quoted him as saying. Mr. Omanidze said he had escaped from government house, where Mr. Gamsakhurdia had imprisoned him for two days last month.

Tengiz Sigua, whom the military council named temporary

prime minister Friday, said the opposition planned to certify Mr. Gamsakhurdia mentally unstable rather than bring him to trial if he surrendered. But rebel leader Ioseliani said Mr. Gamsakhurdia would be put on trial.

Meanwhile, Danish television said Saturday Danish military intelligence officials believe there are still tactical nuclear weapons in strife-torn Georgia.

Their view contradicts assurances given by the leaders of the new commonwealth of former Soviet republics and the official position of the United States, the television news report said.

"Our information indicates a strong probability there are still tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Georgia," Lieutenant-Colonel V. Kide Jensen of military intelligence was quoted as telling TV news.

The report gave no details of how many of the short-range nuclear warheads Jensen believed to be in Georgia or their location.

It cited the official position of commonwealth leaders, accepted by the United States, that all the former Soviet Union's nuclear weapons were concentrated in four republics — Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

It quoted a U.S. Pentagon spokesman as saying "as far as we know there are no nuclear weapons of any sort in Georgia."

Vance reviews peacekeeping prospects for Yugoslavia

UNITED NATIONS (R) — U.N. envoy Cyrus Vance reviewed prospects for a peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia Sunday after the ceasefire agreement between the main combatants.

Mr. Vance, a former U.S. Secretary of State, spent more than two hours with Secretary-General Boutros Ghali Saturday and scheduled another round of talks with him Sunday.

Asked if he had recommended deployment of a U.N. force, Mr. Vance told reporters: "We discussed at considerable length the question of peacekeepers."

But Mr. Vance, although hopeful the 15th ceasefire would at last hold, indicated that any deployment of U.N. troops might be weeks away.

"One can tell if you watch over a period of days, and perhaps even weeks, as to whether or not it is going to stick," he said.

Mr. Vance has warned political leaders of Serbia and breakaway Croatia, and the fighters on both sides that he cannot recommend a U.N. peacekeeping force unless the ceasefire holds.

Leaders of the Serbian-led Yugoslav army and the Croatian National Guard agreed to stop fighting on Friday in an accord brokered by Mr. Vance in Sarajevo.

It was Mr. Vance's fifth trip to Yugoslavia in search of a settlement of the conflict which has cost thousands of lives and displaced at least 600,000 people.

He said he hoped the latest ceasefire would hold, though he did not exclude minor skirmishes.

His recommendations to the Security Council early next week will be crucial.

Diplomats said a peacekeeping force could be organised quickly, but some of the main contributors, such as Canada, had not yet been asked.



Cyrus Vance

They also said two problems remained. Leaders of the Serbian enclave of Krajina in Croatia had said irregulars there would not lay down their arms, while some Croatian policemen had also indicated they were not willing to disarm in areas where U.N. troops might be deployed.

Mr. Vance obliquely referred to these disputes, saying there were matters that still needed to be resolved but they were "not major."

The United Nations would deploy its troops in Serbian enclaves in Croatia, which would mean demobilising any regular or irregular forces there. A U.N. team would also be likely to go to flashpoints in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Meanwhile, sporadic clashes marred a ceasefire brokered by the United Nations in Yugoslavia and soldiers in the field expressed doubts that it would last.

Croatian and Serbian media reported various violations of the truce and each side accused the other of breaching the agreement.

Croatian radio reported an attack on the frontline village of Nustar in eastern Slavonia Saturday night.

"This is the first serious violation of the ceasefire in this opera-

tion group's area," it quoted the Croatian military command in nearby Vinkovci as saying.

Croatian radio said a Croatian soldier was killed at the village of Sirinci in western Slavonia during a federal army infantry attack at mid-morning Saturday.

Tanjung News Agency, which reports from the army side, said the clashes erupted after Croatian fighters attacked positions held by the army and Serb irregulars.

Croatian Radio also reported sporadic fighting on the Adriatic coast near the resort towns of Zadar and Sibenik.

A more serious blow to the truce was the growing resistance to the agreement in the self-proclaimed Serbian enclave of Krajina in southern Croatia.

Krajina leader Milan Babic, increasingly a wild card in the Yugoslav crisis, said he opposed disarming local Serbian paramilitary units as envisaged in the U.N. peace plan.

"We have to express our disagreement with the plan to disarm legal armed forces of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, while the proposed plan does not envisage disarmament of the Croatian armed formations," Mr. Babic said.

On the battlefronts, many Croatian soldiers and commanders said they would respect the ceasefire but had no faith that it would hold.

"I'm surprised by the ceasefire but no, I don't think it will last," said Ivan Jankovic, deputy commander of Croatian forces in the Novska region of western Slavonia. "We hope it lasts but experience has taught us otherwise."

More than 6,000 people have been killed in fighting since Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia last June, sparking a revolt by its Serbian minority supported by Belgrade and the Serb-ruled Yugoslav army.

China and Tajikistan establish ties

PEKING (R) — China and Tajikistan established formal diplomatic links Sunday as Peking continued to establish ties with the successor states to the Soviet Union, especially those on its sensitive border.

The New China Agency reported that a joint communique was signed in Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital, to establish relations at ambassadorial level.

Tajikistan is one of three republics bordering China's Muslim-minority region of Xinjiang in the north west.

Peking said it has established ties with Kyrgyzstan in order to have relations with all members of the

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on its immediate border.

China and Russia set up ties at the ambassadorial level on Dec. 27. Peking subsequently set up ties with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the Ukraine.

China has recognised all republics of the CIS and Georgia, which has not yet joined the commonwealth, but has said it will negotiate full ties with each individually.

China and the Republic of Ukraine established diplomatic links Saturday.

The New China News Agency

said China and Ukraine signed a joint communique in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, opening diplomatic relations at ambassador level from Jan. 4.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen on Dec. 27 sent telegrams to the foreign ministers of Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

Mr. Qian told the republics that China recognised their independence and would discuss arrangements for establishing diplomatic relations with them later.

Khmer Rouge accuses Vietnam of breaking truce

BANGKOK (R) — The Khmer Rouge has accused Vietnamese forces in Cambodia of attacking communes in south west Kompong Speu province late last month, killing and wounding many villagers.

A Khmer Rouge radio report seen here Sunday claimed about 200 Vietnamese in Cambodia had fired rockets and heavy artillery into villages in two communes in Phnom Srooch district on Dec. 23, killing children and pregnant women.

Last week the Khmer Rouge charged that Vietnamese forces had shelled Cambodian villages.

Hanoi maintains that it has withdrawn all its troops from Cambodia since 1989.

The Khmer Rouge Radio appealed to United Nations officials monitoring an October peace accord to "take effective and concrete measures to prevent the Vietnamese aggressors" from violating a fragile ceasefire between the Phnom Penh government and the three-faction guerrilla group dominated by the Khmer Rouge.

SEUL (R) — President George Bush arrived in South Korea Sunday to discuss contentious trade issues and security on the divided Korean peninsula, the world's remaining cold war flashpoint.

But first he was scheduled to play tennis with South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo.

The president and his wife, Barbara, were greeted at Seoul airport by Prime Minister Chung Won-Shik. They landed just before 3.30 p.m. (0630 GMT) from Singapore on the third leg of a 12-day Asian-Pacific tour.

Mr. Koh and Mr. Bush were to meet for a game of tennis later in the day, according to their official itinerary.

Formal talks between the two are to take place Monday, when U.S. officials say Mr. Bush is expected to reaffirm that the United States will not withdraw more troops from South Korea until a dispute over North Korea's nuclear programme is fully resolved.

The United States has withdrawn battlefield nuclear weapons and 6,000 troops from South Korea in recent months. But the withdrawal of about 6,000 more of the 39,000 U.S. troops in South Korea is on hold.

"South Korea obviously is very concerned about the nuclear programme in the North," said a U.S. official who asked to remain unidentified.

"We will reaffirm our intention not to withdraw any more of our troops until there is a settlement of that issue."

U.S. and South Korean analysts believe North Korea could make a nuclear weapon within two years, possibly less, unless the programme is curtailed.

North and South Korea last month signed a preliminary pact banning nuclear weapons from the peninsula.

Pyeongyang insists it is not trying to develop nuclear weapons and has agreed to an inspection programme by the In-

1992 critical for Canada's ruling party

OTTAWA (R) — Although New Year fireworks lit up parliament, Canadians have little to celebrate in 1992 as their country faces possible secession by Quebec amid the worst recession since the 1930s depression.

The Conservative government, despite months of consultation and consideration, appears no closer to devising a new political formula to satisfy mostly French-speaking Quebec and keep it from voting to secede in an October referendum.

The nation's economy, one of the industrialised world's most dynamic for much of the 1980s, slumped into 1992 still mired in a recession.

"There's a 'ling among Canadians that they can't get worse," said Gallup pollster Lorne Babinoff.

The government of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has only about 15 per cent approval in opinion polls, the lowest support of any Canadian administration.

The future of the party and of Mr. Mulroney, who won consecutive election majorities in 1984 and 1988, looks bleak with the next vote necessary before the end of 1993.

The government has been almost exclusively preoccupied with cobbling together constitutional amendments to allay Quebec's fears that its French language and culture may be eroding.

A parliamentary committee on political reform is scheduled to report to the government by late February. Then the government will present amendments to parliament in April.

Some negative reaction to proposals made public so far

threaten an agreement and, federal officials fear, risk prompting Quebec to opt for independence in the referendum.

Mr. Mulroney, 52, still has a comfortable majority in the House of Commons — 11 of 158 Conservatives would have to desert him before the government could be defeated.

But some government members sense a lack of direction.

Several emerged from a pre-Christmas meeting shaking their heads about what track ministers were planning to take to avert political catastrophe.

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Bush arrives in Seoul to discuss Korean detente

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ternational Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

But the concern of both Seoul and Washington is that any bomb-grade plutonium produced would not be subject to inspection under the programme.

On Monday, Mr. Bush is to address the National Assembly and visit American troops near the heavily-armed border between the two Koreas.

Thousands of police were on duty in Seoul Sunday. They fear radical students and dissidents, who want Washington to withdraw all its troops immediately and stop applying trade pressures, might try to attack U.S. Offices during the visit.

Mr. Bush and his wife will stay at the traditional Korean-style residence of U.S. Ambassador Donald Gregg in central Seoul, the target of a 1989 raid by students.

A group of radicals hurled tear gas grenades and home-made bombs at the house after scaling a wall to get into the heavily-guarded compound. Mr. Gregg's living room was wrecked in the attack but no one was hurt.

South Korea expects Mr. Bush to express his support for the South's efforts to achieve detente with North Korea.

"President Bush is expected to reaffirm that progress in normalising relations between the United States and North Korea in the future depends on progress in inter-Korean ties," a senior Korean official said.

On trade, Mr. Bush is expected to urge South Korea to open its markets more to U.S. goods and to drop its insistence that it is a developing economy and therefore needs trade barriers to maintain growth.

"With a growth rate of 6.7 per cent, our pitch is they're becoming a very mature economy," the U.S. official said.

Mr. Roh's aides have said the most explosive political issue in South Korea — opening its rice market to U.S. imports — will be

sidestepped during the visit.

"Words such as 'rice' will not be mentioned," the senior Korean official said.

Mr. Bush leaves for Japan Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Singapore has hailed the visit by President Bush as a resounding success and pledged to promote a continued American presence in the region.

"Mr. Bush's visit was very good and very, very successful," Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong told reporters at the airport Sunday after seeing Mr. Bush off to Seoul at the end of his three-day stay.

The visit saw the announcement of several new agreements on security, trade, investment and environmental issues which will increase U.S. presence in the booming South East Asian region.

Mr. Bush announced Saturday an agreement in principle to relocate a naval logistics command from Subic Bay Naval Station in the Philippines, the major U.S. base in the Pacific which the United States will vacate by the end of the year.

"We appreciate Singapore's far-sighted approach to the security requirements of a new era," Mr. Bush said.

President Wee Kim Wee, toasting Mr. Bush at a state dinner Saturday night, said: "Although the cold war has ended and Communist ideology is discredited, the U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific and continuation of the U.S.-Japan security alliance remains vital for the region's peace and stability."

"Singapore will do what it can under the existing memorandum of understanding between us to facilitate a continued American presence and interest in the region."

That agreement signed in November 1990 and hailed by Washington as a model for the region, allows U.S. military planes and ships access to Singapore ports and an airfield as well as periodic training exercises with

the Singapore Armed Forces.

No similar agreements have been signed with other members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which groups Singapore with Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Brunei has said it will accept visits by U.S. warships and Malaysia and Indonesia have indicated a willingness to allow U.S. ships to use commercial yards for repairs.

"Access agreements and increased U.S.-ASEAN dialogue can help us work cooperatively to promote stability," Mr. Bush said.

Washington says that because of modern technology and force deployment, a huge base like Subic is no longer vital though a logistic centre is. Military officials say much repair and supply can now be done on a commercial basis in the region.

In 1990, 67 U.S. Navy ships visited Singapore, spending \$20 million on repairs, fuel and provisions.

Mr. Lee Sunday played down possible concern from Singapore's neighbours that the move would constitute a new U.S. base, a prospect criticised in the past by some, notably Malaysia, as a threat to ASEAN principles of peaceful coexistence.

"I believe everybody has been informed," Mr. Lee told reporters. "These are matters to be sorted out."

Mr. Bush proposed a new bilateral investment treaty to be shaped at the first meeting of U.S. and Singapore officials under another model agreement, the trade and investment framework, signed by the two nations in October.

"It's to ratify what already exists, which is an open investment climate on both sides," said a U.S. embassy official. "But it's also two-way, recognising the new reality that Singapore is investing more and more in the U.S."

COLUMN 8

Paul Simon's South Africa tour to proceed

JOHANNESBURG (R) — American singer Paul Simon will go ahead with a tour of South Africa despite growing opposition among black radical groups and a reported threat of violence.

The tour's promoters said Saturday, The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) joined the letter's youth wing in opposing the visit, scheduled to start on Jan. 11. But Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) confirmed its support for the tour, which AZAPO's youth wing wanted last week would encounter a "hostile climate."

A top official of the youth movement, which maintains that genuine political reform has not yet started, was quoted by the Saturday Star as saying violence would be used if necessary to halt performances.

Barry accused of sexual relations with prison visitor

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal officials are interviewing witnesses who said they saw a woman perform oral sex on former Mayor Marion Barry in front of dozens of people in a prison visitors' room, government and legal sources said.

Barry's lawyer Kenneth Mundy said Saturday the allegations were "totally groundless. We deny them."

He said the complaint against Mr. Barry by an inmate named Floyd Robertson was from a "malcontent prisoner with a grudge."

Robertson, serving a 38-month sentence for distribution of a controlled substance, said he complained of the incident to authorities at the minimum-security Petersburg Prison in Virginia last Sunday. "He was sitting eight feet (2.4 metres) away from me during the oral sex. There's no way I wouldn't have seen it," Mr. Robertson said in a telephone interview from federal prison at Butner, North Carolina, where he was moved after the incident.

Dutch prostitutes required to charge sales tax

THE HAGUE (AP) — Dutch prostitutes now have to charge sales tax, but officials don't expect to get much of a return from a profession that's part of this nation's underground economy.

The 18.5 per cent value added tax for self-employed prostitutes is meant to eliminate their competitive edge over brothels already required to collect it. Finance Ministry spokeswoman Mariette Van Vucht said Friday. Prostitution is legal in Holland. The 1992 tax law stems from a 1990 court ruling that it was unfair to exempt self-employed prostitutes from the sales tax already charged to brothels.

Many of them run openly, like night clubs. The same tax is included in most purchase prices, with the exception of food and health products which qualify for a lower 6 per cent tax. But officials concede that freelance prostitutes are unlikely to report their earnings, much less bill their customers for sales tax.

"We don't really expect major revenues from this," Ms. Van Vucht said. "And we're not about to go on a witch hunt. The idea is that they are to be treated as entrepreneurs just as any other."

British pigs are real radio hams

LONDON (R) — Pigs on a British farm are keeping up with the news by listening to BBC World Service radio broadcasts in 36 languages. The tin roof of their sty acts as a receiver which picks up signals from a powerful British Broadcasting Corporation transmitter close by. "I'm sure my pigs know more about what's going on than I do," farmer Derek Allen, from Rampton in southwest England, told British newspapers. "It seems to soothe them."

Police tell thieves, beware bird-eating Ariadne

LONDON (R) — Police warned thieves who stole a flat-sized Guatemalan spider that it could do more than entertain them — a single bite by it could paralyse a person for 10 hours.

The bird-eating spider, called Ariadne and worth 70 pounds (\$125), was stolen from a house in south London. Police urged anyone finding a big, black spider with red hairs to treat it "with extreme caution."

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